

WILDERNESS IMAGERY IN THE BONNY METHOD OF GUIDED IMAGERY  
AND MUSIC (GIM): A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INQUIRY

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by  
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## **Abstract**

### **WILDERNESS IMAGERY IN THE BONNY METHOD OF GUIDED IMAGERY AND MUSIC (GIM): A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INQUIRY**

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The author employed phenomenological methodology to examine clients' experiences of wilderness imagery in music psychotherapy sessions utilizing the Bonny Method of Guided Imagery and Music (GIM). GIM is a music-centered approach to psychotherapy in which the client engages with spontaneously generated imagery while listening to specially selected programs of music from the Western classical canon. The resultant imagery provides the basis for therapeutic experiences. Client experiences at times include imagery of wilderness. Due to the conflicting and at times contradictory ways of defining wilderness, the author utilized a broad definition: that which is primarily nonhuman. Three individuals with whom the researcher had conducted at least four GIM sessions prior to the study participated. Each participant engaged in a semi-structured interview focused on their experiences of wilderness imagery in one session of their choosing. Twelve themes emerged from these interviews: The experiences involved extraordinary interactions with wilderness images, and events felt both unexpected and predetermined. The degree of agency felt in choice-events was important to their experiences. Wilderness imagery provided both support and challenges for the participants. There was a sense of openness and

expansiveness, as well as continuity of affect, associations, feelings, or images through shifting settings or images. Each participant became wilderness images, yet there was a sense of separateness. Wilderness was accompanied by energy sensations, and wilderness contained that which they needed. Wilderness images were experienced as analogs to waking life. Finally, the full meaning of these experiences continued to emerge over time. These themes illustrated complementarity in the participants' experiences of wilderness imagery. This way of understanding incongruent or opposing qualities, experiences, or beliefs provides a more integrative alternative to the idea of paradox in therapy. Additionally, their experiences pointed to an alternative organizational system in wilderness that tended to be nonlinear and unpredictable.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

For as long as I can remember, nothing sparked my curiosity and imagination like passing by a path into the woods. For me, the act of wandering into the woods has always been one full of wonder and excitement. As a child canoeing in the mangrove forests of southern Florida, I explored a maze of trees and waterways, each path leading to a unique spot into which I could be absorbed. Later, as my forays into the wilderness became longer, more varied, and more intentional, I became more aware of the altered sense of time and identity in these places. Something was qualitatively different about my experience in these places, set apart from civilization. It was a complicated feeling. I always felt a sense of awe or reverence, even a sense of spirituality; at the same time, it was a gritty and literally earthy, grounding experience. It was simultaneously inviting and dangerous, which for me added an element of excitement or abandon. There was a sense of being both apart from and also incorporated into. I felt at the same time alien and at home. The wilderness was a place of experiencing these poles; it was and still is a place of paradox.

As a client in Bonny Method of Guided Imagery and Music (GIM) sessions, I found many meaningful image-based interactions with natural objects in natural settings. Later, in facilitating GIM sessions as a trainee, studying GIM literature, and particularly in transcribing sessions as a research assistant, I started to notice how often the wilderness played some role in the clients' imagery, whether it was as a setting like a beach, forest or

mountain, or as an element of the wilderness like an animal or a tree. I understood the common thread through these images to be the distinct separateness from human civilization. This brought me back to stories and myths I heard as a child that were so often set in the wilderness. The wilderness was a place distinctly set apart, a place for purification through trials, and a place where monsters and beasts dwelt. But again, the experiences I witnessed and studied were varied and complex. I began to consider how our complex relationships with the wilderness manifest in our inner experiences, and how our inner experiences of wilderness might shape our attitudes and understandings of the external world.

This issue gained importance for me as I began to view my own relationship with the environment in the context of sustainability and climate issues. I see individual perspectives on the environment as reflections of larger cultural attitudes toward the environment. Accordingly, I believe that the ecological crisis that we face (Cubash et al., 2013) requires an examination and reevaluation of our complex, multifaceted relationships with the environment. Part of this entails better understanding the elements of our environment that are furthest removed from our human civilization: the wilderness. These are the musings that inspired this study.

### **The Bonny Method of Guided Imagery and Music**

The Bonny Method of Guided Imagery and Music (GIM) is a music-centered depth-approach to music psychotherapy. In this method, specially selected classical music is used as a catalyst for a client's imagery experiences. Developed by Helen Bonny in the 1970s, the method is used to help clients to "mine the depths in order to bring reintegration, insight, and wholeness" (Bonny, 2002c, p. 96). A GIM session typically consists of three segments: a prelude or preliminary discussion, the music, and a postlude for verbal and nonverbal

processing (Ventre, 2002). During the prelude, the GIM therapist and client discuss relevant issues in a check-in format. Based on the information gathered during this discussion, the GIM therapist selects an appropriate induction and a program of specially selected classical music. In selecting the music, the therapist draws on an extensive knowledge of music programs developed and used by GIM therapists, each with a particular character, arc, and intensity profile (C. McKinney, personal communication, June, 2012). Some considerations in choosing the music include issues that are present for the client, mood and affect, energy level, physical issues such as restlessness or pain, stage of therapy, and familiarity with GIM. The basic task is to choose music that matches or supports where the client is in terms of these considerations. The client is invited to recline or lie down as the GIM therapist offers an induction to move into a deeply relaxed and focused state, and invites the client to be present with whatever imagery comes (Ventre, 2002). Often, the GIM therapist will offer an image, perhaps an object, setting, color, or feeling, as a way of providing a focus for the music imaging. The induction helps the client to filter out external stimuli and increase focus on the client's "inner environment" (Ventre, 2002, p. 31) in order to achieve a more highly receptive state. As the music begins, the GIM therapist and client maintain a dialogue about the client's spontaneous imagery. It is the therapist's role to help the client engage more fully with the experience and explore the imagery in as open a way as possible while still containing the experience in a safe manner. In a sense, the therapist is the tether that grounds the client to the world of waking consciousness. The dialogue also allows the therapist to be present with the client's imagery experiences, serving as witness and support, and also gathering information for processing in the final portion of the session. After the music comes to an end, the therapist helps the client to gradually transition back into normal waking

consciousness. In the session postlude, the therapist and client process the session imagery. This may take a variety of forms and often includes discussion, visual art, or movement. It is not the goal of the postlude to analyze or interpret the imagery. Though insights may be gained from reflection, discussion, and application of imagery to the client's life, the therapeutic work is done by simply experiencing the imagery in the music<sup>1</sup> (Bonny, 1987/2002e). Indeed, the act of languaging the experience, at times, may distort the experience in counterproductive ways when it moves into an analytic mode. Deriving an analytic understanding of an image or experience from the session can contain the image or experience in a more rigid and cognitive form, detracting from the holistic and dynamic experience of the image. It can also detract from the fuller meaning of the image or experience that tends to shift over time. However, one advantage of languaging an experience or image in GIM is that sharing it out loud can help the client to claim the experience and anchor it in their waking life. If the client desires to further process or analyze imagery with the GIM therapist, this may be taken up in the prelude of the following session.

Primary to the GIM process is the music; indeed, the music and GIM therapist are described as co-therapists, each helping to facilitate the client's therapeutic process (Ventre, 2002). As it was originally developed, only Western classical music is used. Summer (1988) wrote, "Classical music...is the only music that can be used for GIM. It is multileveled, stimulating, and connects inner experiences" (p. 4). The music creates "an environment in which one may release intense emotions, regress to primary process states, express creativity and imaginativeness, and contribute toward the peak experience" (Bonny & Pahnke, 1972). A group of primary trainers in GIM wrote that "music is able to initiate movement in the

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<sup>1</sup> This point will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

psyche, reveal realms of consciousness, evoke imagery, and promote integration of mind, body, and spirit” (Bush et al., as cited in Clark, 2002, p. 23). One important factor in this function of the music is the client’s experience of altered states of consciousness.

A client is guided into an altered state of consciousness first by the GIM therapist, and then by the music. Altered states of consciousness involve “qualitative and quantitative shifts in the perceptions of time, space, and energy” from typical waking consciousness (Ventre, 2002, p. 32). There is not one altered state, but many. Some common examples of altered states include, but are not limited to, “daydreaming, intense concentration, prayer, meditation, chemically induced [altered states of consciousness], sleep, dreaming, sensory deprivation or overload, creativity, unity, collective unconscious, and nirvana” (Ventre, 2002, p. 32). In any altered state, an individual’s awareness is different from those in typical waking consciousness. This often makes for increased creativity, new ways of experiencing thoughts and sensations, new understandings, and images. Bonny (1978/2002b) wrote that simply changing an individual’s state of consciousness may help to unlock imagery so that it may be moved into the client’s normal state of awareness. Altered states may also provide the opportunity to find new ways of synthesizing experiences or understandings. Perilli (2002) wrote that “one can focus the attention on a multidimensional space, enabling metaphors to assume characteristics of a representative ‘hologram’ of the situation and of the client’s growth potential” while in the altered states of consciousness often experienced in GIM (p. 435). Through imagery in these altered states, “the psyche is able to have a holistic view of itself and the universe” (Bush et al., as cited in Clark, 2002, p. 23). In these ways, altered states of consciousness are utilized in GIM as a vehicle for therapeutic growth.

## Imagery

Imagery has been used in health practices for the span of recorded human history (Achterberg, 1985). These practices are widely varied and function with normal waking consciousness as well a wide spectrum of altered states of consciousness. Examples through history include shamanism, dream work, the placebo effect, and Jung's Active Imagination techniques (Achterberg, 1985; Jung & Bennet, 1970; McMahon & Sheikh, 2002). In contemporary psychotherapy, imagery is used across the spectrum of theoretical orientations, from action-oriented therapies such as cognitive-behavioral therapy, to experiential therapies such as Gestalt therapy (Singer, 2006).

Imagery includes not just visual images, but the complete spectrum of human experience. This ranges from each of the senses to kinesthetic awarenesses to memories to potentialities projected into the future (Assagioli, 1971; Singer, 2006). Further, imagery can be multidimensional (Assagioli, 1971). An individual may experience many layers of an image simultaneously, producing what may be, in many cases, a richer and more vivid experience than if it had actually occurred.

In therapy, imagery may arise through conscious or unconscious processes (Achterberg, 1985). It may be directed and guided for a specific purpose (Samuels & Samuels, 1975; Singer, 2006). For example, a client may be directed to visualize an experience that, in consensual reality, produces debilitating anxiety. Visualizing such a scenario may aid the process of desensitization (Singer, 2006). Imagery may also be elicited from the unconscious. Examples here include working with dreams or spontaneous imagery in relaxed states (Achterberg, 1985). This includes the process of making the unconscious conscious (Assagioli, 1971).



Imagery may be guided or spontaneous. In guided imagery, a therapist may dictate a script or other suggestions for the client to visualize (Singer, 2006). In spontaneous imagery, a therapist may or may not provide an initial structure for imagery, and the subsequent imagery experience unfolds spontaneously in the client's experience. Two examples of this type of imagery experience include Jung's Active Imagination (Jung & Bennet, 1970) and the Bonny Method of Guided imagery and Music (Ventre, 2002).

When an individual engages in imagery, the body responds as if the experience is actually happening (Achterberg, 1985). Neurons associated with that experience in the central, somatic, and autonomic nervous systems fire with sufficient rapidity to produce the effects of the experience itself. The experience is made real in the body and mind in just as vivid a fashion, and sometimes with greater intensity (Samuels & Samuels, 1975). These qualities make imagery particularly useful in therapy. In such a context, an individual can re-experience and heal memories, experiment with new ways of being, and shape the future (Singer, 2006).

### **Imagery in GIM**

A client's imagery experiences are the primary vehicle of therapy in GIM. Bonny wrote that "the mind, or the psyche, is filled with innumerable images which provide an unending, rich source for the solutions of all our problems and a creative base for unimaginable personal wealth" (Bonny, 2002a, p. 236). In GIM, imagery is broadly defined as any imagined experience. It may be visual imagery, as the word typically connotes, but it may also be in the realm of any of the other senses. Individuals may have visual, olfactory, auditory, tactile, gustatory, somatic, emotional, memory-based, and kinesthetic imagery in which one has the sensation of moving through space. Often, a client experiences many of

these types of imagery simultaneously, creating a complex multi-modal and multi-leveled imagery experience (Bonny, 1975/2002d). Imaging in GIM allows one to perceive an immensely complex experience with various modes of sensory input simultaneously, rather than relying on a linear process of language and description (Bush, 1995).

Imaging in GIM has been described as a process of allowing (Bonny, 2002c). By engaging with the music and the GIM therapist in the altered state of consciousness, the client experiences imagery that emerges spontaneously. As a client becomes more familiar with the process of imaging in GIM, the client learns to make fuller use of all the dimensions of the imagery, including sensory content, feelings, emotions, and awarenesses (Bonny & Tansill, 1977/2002).

### **Wilderness**

Nature imagery is ubiquitous in GIM; indeed, it is difficult to imagine a session devoid of such imagery. One subset of nature imagery is wilderness imagery. The very idea of wilderness is a concept much debated, and this discussion will begin with moving toward an operational definition of wilderness.

#### **Etymology of Wilderness**

The definition of wilderness is a complicated one. The Oxford English Dictionary (2014) lists the word as of Old English, Middle Low German, and Middle Dutch origin meaning a wild or uncultivated land, uninhabited or inhabited only by wild animals, a waste or desolate region of any kind, and a region in which one may wander or become lost. In Christian tradition, it has also referred to the present life in contrast to the afterlife. Several scholars have written that the word's etymological root translates to *will-of-the-land* (Cookson, 2011, p. 187; Nash, 2001). In Old Norse and Old English, wilderness may be

translated as the place of wild beasts (Nash, 2001). Nash described the development of the term, writing that wilderness has become a designator for a place without the typical order associated with human civilization. With this focus on a lack of culturally-defined order rather than essential qualities, wilderness may take on multivalent and sometimes contradictory qualities.

Cookson (2011) differentiated concepts of wildness from wilderness. Wildness, he wrote, involves a primary reliance on naturalness, made up of “base” (p. 187) honesty, spontaneity, and instinct. It is only when an organism has a sufficient level of internal clarity of those instincts and basic motivations that it may have this quality of wildness. In this state of wildness, Cookson asserted that an organism interacts with its environment in such a way that those base needs are met and instincts manifested. Multiple organisms with this quality of wildness interact to create a sustainable, durable system in which all base needs are met. Wilderness, then, is this system composed of organisms with the quality of wildness. Cookson argued that it is only when humans are unable to tap into this state of wildness in a constructive manner that the wild becomes *other-ized*, disowned. A problem with Cookson’s argument, however, is the idea that with wildness comes an internal clarity that “does not allow confusion, padding, phoniness, and avoidance,” (p. 189) which feeds into an ideology of the infallible goodness of naturalness.

Cookson’s description of wildness drew attention to the agency of organisms. From this perspective, it is up to the organism itself to take on that quality of honesty and clarity to live in such a way as to meet its base needs and act on its base instincts. Shepard (1992) also differentiated this quality of wildness. In contrast to Cookson’s description, Shepard described it strictly in terms of breeding and human agency: Wildness occurs anywhere that

“sexual assortment and genealogy are not controlled by human design” (p. 73). To Shepard, wilderness has become a term more closely related to the anonymous natural landscape on a calendar than with true *wildness*. Wilderness, instead,

is a departure into a kind of therapeutic land management, a release from our crowded and overbuilt environment, an esthetic balm, healing those who sense the presence of the disease but who may have confused its cause with the absence of therapy. (p. 70)

From this perspective, wilderness is an artificial construction of that which is *other* to the human built environment. Shepard contrasted this conceptualization of wilderness with the way in which the Australian Aborigines conceptualize the Outback. For them, it is a series of interconnections rather than a two-dimensional landscape, as a calendar picture. As in Cookson’s definition, wilderness is constituted not of entities but of interactions.

Zimmerman (1992) wrote that wilderness is the *other* that reminds humanity of its dependency on powers beyond itself. From this perspective, wilderness is an exterior quality that in effect checks human hubris. Wilderness is also an entity that, when contacted, keeps the individual rooted in the world beyond the reach of human civilization.

While Zimmerman (1992) focused on place and power, Cronon (1995) situated the idea of wilderness in terms of temporality. He wrote that human culture has understood wilderness as a place that either precedes or transcends history and time (p. 79). It is a natural state that no longer exists in objective terms; it is manifested only in the way that we view and conceptualize the environment. From this perspective, Cronon wrote, wilderness is the state of the earth before the Fall, before the development of culture, before time.

Accordingly, this conceptualization of wilderness denotes a place in which a human can be what is truly Human, transcending cultural construction and convention. Like Nash (2001),

Cronon's understanding of wilderness is as an abstracted entity rather than a fully instantiated physical place or being.

Similarly, wilderness writer Sigurd Olson described wilderness as a container for man's *inherent nature* in solitude and self-reliance (Olson & Backes, 2001). For him, wilderness is place apart from the certainty of needs-fulfillment afforded by human civilization. By being in the wilderness, he posited, a human being comes into contact with a core humanness undistorted by culture and civilization. This perspective idealizes both the ease of civilization and the good of basic human nature in isolation from human social structure.

The US government has made several attempts at defining wilderness in various legislation and policy documents. The US Forest Service defined wilderness in terms of the categories *primitive*, *roadless*, and *natural*. The Outdoor Recreation Resources Commission defined wilderness in more objective terms as over 100,000 acres without public roads and without human disturbance other than visitors, and adding the harder-to-define criterion of being primarily affected by nature rather than humans (Nash, 2001; Public Law 88-577, 1964). In a similar attempt to describe wilderness in more objective, practical terms, ecologist Aldo Leopold (1921) defined wilderness as a region that could "absorb a two week's pack trip" without roads, paths, or human industry (p. 719).

From just these few attempts at defining the idea of wilderness emerge many disparate elements. Wilderness may consist of the will of the land in contrast to human will, and accordingly may be uncultivated and away from humans (Nash, 2001; Oxford English Dictionary, 2014; Public Law 88-577, 1964). Wilderness may be without the order that we expect in human civilization (Nash, 2001; Olson & Backes, 2001). There may be an essential

wildness to it, consisting of honesty to an organism's basic needs and instincts (Cookson, 2011; Shepard, 1992). From an anthropocentric perspective, wilderness also may be an embodiment of the other (Cookson, 2011; Zimmerman, 1992). With these widely varying elements, it becomes clear that a descriptive definition of wilderness is problematic at best. This has two-fold significance. First, it makes clear the difficulty of defining wilderness in any objective terms for the purpose of an empirical study. The second transcends issues of academia; these disparate attempts at definitions are analyses and manifestations of the cultural discourse that shapes the unspoken assumptions, denotations, and connotations of the idea of wilderness for any individual, including clients coming in for GIM sessions. These discourses are not homogenous nor do they reach consensus, but represent a range of considerations attached to the idea of wilderness from which individuals selectively make use of meanings.

### **Wilderness as Spectrum**

Nash (2001) addressed this challenge of defining such a nebulous concept as wilderness. Nash wrote that while wilderness is a noun, it behaves like an adjective. The word attributes a quality to that which it describes: "It produces a certain mood or feeling in a given individual, and, as a consequence, may be assigned by that person to a specific place" (p. 1). Indeed, according to Nash, wilderness is a state of mind rather than a true and intrinsic state. It is a perceived condition that stems from the differentiation between more controlled and less controlled spaces. It follows then that any individual's conceptualization of wilderness will be unique, and that any place or object to which an individual assigns the term wilderness will differ. In line with this claim, Nash wrote that wilderness may connote a

range of contradictory qualities: hostile, dangerous, mysterious, elevating, that which brings delight or pleasure.

In order to account for such widely varying qualities and criteria for describing wilderness, Nash (2001) proposed a spectrum. On one side is the totally wild; on the other, totally civilized. Places and objects may be placed on that spectrum according to degree of intensity of wild or civilized. This way, a totally wild place untouched by human civilization except for a discarded beer can from a backpacker would still be wild, though slightly less so than if it had not contained that trace of human waste. A cultivated landscape still strongly rooted in nature, such as farm or garden, might lie somewhere in the middle of the spectrum. This model allows for fluid definitions of wilderness that may vary widely between individuals. One individual might describe a city park as far towards the wild side of the spectrum; another, well within the civilized.

### **Operational Definition of Wilderness**

This study utilizes Nash's (2001) spectrum model to define wilderness. Based on the spectrum model of wilderness, two broad subsets of wilderness are wilderness as environment and wilderness as object. Environments may be described on a spectrum from human-built environments to cultivated environments to wilderness. Human-built environments are, clearly, non-wilderness. Cultivated environments such as a farm or pasture may be understood as located on the spectrum somewhere between totally human and totally wild; the degree to which these environments are situated toward human or wild will depend on the client's perspective. Wilderness as environment may contain both natural and human objects, may be or may not be inhabited, and may or may not be cultivated. Wilderness as object will occur within both wilderness environments and human-built environments. If an

object is defined by the imager as primarily manufactured or crafted by humans, then it may be defined as nonwilderness.

Because this model embraces an individual's subjective experience of a place or object in defining wilderness, a phenomenological perspective becomes crucial. A more thorough discussion of phenomenological perspectives on this topic will follow below.

### **Wilderness in GIM**

To date, there is no extant literature that examines the experience of wilderness imagery in GIM. Wilderness, like much work in GIM, holds contradictions. Wilderness has elements of beauty, awe, and spirituality, but also of danger, hostility, and savageness. Accordingly, wilderness imagery may be one way in which an individual experiences such contradictions in their own personal psychotherapeutic work. Careful attention to such experiences may help a client work through and integrate these contradictions; this is often a crucial element of psychotherapeutic growth (Johnson, 1991). Ward (2002) wrote that positive and negative images, emotions, and feelings may be experienced in GIM imagery, and that "only when the individual takes responsibility for *both* light and dark is it possible to move toward wholeness, which is what Jung considered to be the fullest knowledge and/or expression possible of all aspects of one's personality" (p. 210). This integrative motion of therapy is motion towards becoming a whole person, or individuation.

One strength of GIM is the way in which clients are able to experience multiple dimensions of issues, concerns, personality, and the world in a single image (Bonny, 1978/2002b; Bush et al., as cited in Clark, 2002; Perilli, 2002; Ward, 2002). Through such experiences, a client may begin to work towards integration on conscious and unconscious



levels both verbally and non-verbally. Because of this possibility, such experiences within the context of GIM must be explored.

Wilderness, at times, may be a physical and environmental embodiment of the *other*. In many orientations to therapy including psychodynamic, this experience of the *other* can be fundamental to personal growth (Summer, 1991). If this does indeed occur in GIM therapy, it must be researched in order to better understand the therapeutic process.

Wilderness has prominent roles in religious stories, myths, fairy tales, and fringe culture (Cronon, 1995; Duerr, 1987; Merchant, 1995). In such a way, conceptualizations of wilderness are a part of human heritage. Beyond that, it may be our conceptualizations of wilderness that help define human civilization. As Duerr (1987) wrote, it is only by knowing ourselves in the wilderness that we can fully know ourselves in civilization. GIM may offer a way of experiencing that wilderness in a vivid, completely immersive, and therapeutic context. Because of the widely ranging roles and qualities that have been attributed to wilderness, this phenomenon's role in the context of GIM must be examined.

### **GIM, Wilderness Imagery, and the Wilderness Discourse**

GIM can provide a unique perspective on conceptualizations of wilderness and the relationship with that construct. To date, no research has explicitly or implicitly examined what insights GIM experiences might have on the wider discourse on wilderness. Such an exploration may not only shed light on the imagery clients experience in GIM, but also contribute to the discourse on our often strained and sometimes paradoxical relationship with wilderness.

At the center of this discourse on an individual's experience of wilderness is the self-other dichotomy and the ways in which this dichotomy often manifests in our experiences of

wilderness. Because GIM is a therapy method that utilizes altered states, GIM may provide a new mode of exploring these relationships. Altered states provide unique opportunities for developing new awarenesses through different perspectives, shifted awarenesses, and increased creativity (Bush, 1995; Grof, 1985; Ventre, 2002). Accordingly, wilderness imagery in GIM may present new understandings of and shifted perspectives on the relationship between self and other.

Taking this point further, such an examination may call into question this distinction between self and other. Individuals often experience transpersonal moments in GIM sessions in which this self-other dichotomy is challenged and sometimes dissolves. Transpersonal experiences may be broadly defined as experiences beyond the bounds of self (Wilber, 1993). These occur in the wilderness literature of John Muir and H. D. Thoreau: nature experiences are transcendent in that one transcends the world of human culture and achieves some degree of communion with the Absolute or the Sublime (Cronon, 1995). From the deep ecology perspective, transcendence describes the process of recognizing some degree of sameness between other and self (Fox, 1995). Here, the self-other dichotomy does not become permeable; instead, the bounds of self-ness expand to include the object formerly defined as other. For example, when an individual is in the presence of a wilderness object, the individual recognizes the wildness in self and self in wilderness. In doing so, the individual's contained understanding of self is conflated with the sameness found in the wilderness object. The individual identifies the wilderness object as having a degree of sameness with the self, thus weakening the self-other dichotomy between the individual and the wilderness object.

Conversely, in GIM, individuals often have experiences of actually *becoming* the wilderness object, having tangible communion with the other. In the example above, a client may suddenly have the experience of becoming the wilderness object, as the former manifestation of self disappears and self becomes what was formerly other. The self/other dichotomy does not disappear, but instead becomes irrelevant as the self is now the other. Another variety of transcendent and integrative experience occurs in GIM and has been described as Unity experiences (Lewis, 1998; Rugenstein, 1996; Wilber, 1993). In the above example, the forms of the self and the wilderness object may dissolve into light or energy or vibration or color or space. Whatever the manifestation, there is the sense that everything is in a state of oneness. The dichotomy between self and other disappears as the form and constructs that define self and other each disappear. These transcendent experiences can complicate roles and meaning that might otherwise be assigned to wilderness imagery that arise in GIM. Because of the prevalence of such transpersonal experiences, GIM may provide a unique perspective on the self-other dichotomy at the very root of the wilderness construct.

### **Methodology**

I utilized phenomenological methodology for this study. This decision was informed by the primary aim of this proposed study, which was to better understand clients' experiences of wilderness imagery in GIM sessions. Phenomenology is a mode of inquiry based on the work of Husserl and Heidegger (Moustakas, 1994). It seeks to study phenomena by describing the experience of that phenomenon itself. At the core of phenomenology is the idea that an object or event may only be described fully and truly when based on the observer's direct experience of the thing; hence, Heidegger's words, "To the things

themselves!” (Heidegger, 1953/2010, p. 26). The focus of such inquiry is on the appearance of things, removed from biases and learnings, or what we have come to believe is true though divorced from the direct experience (Moustakas, 1994). The final goal of phenomenological inquiry is to derive meanings and essences at the core of an experience, rather than fact. In this way, an experience may be described and understood as a unified whole, rather than fragmented pieces of an experience as would be found in positivist inquiry (Forinash & Grocke, 2005).

This knowledge, meaning, and understanding are derived from the subjective experiences of individuals collected through individuals’ descriptions of those experiences. Accordingly, these studies will be “retrospective and recollective” (Forinash & Grocke, 2005, p. 323). Through collecting and analyzing this data, the researcher distills the essence of the experience as a unified whole. These essences may shift or extend in a “chain of meaning-making through memories, associations, and experiences all informing each other (Moustakas, 1994, p. 55). Accordingly, there is no final or absolute truth that may be found through phenomenology. There is pure description of the experience *qua* experience.

### **Basic Principles of Phenomenology**

Two principles crucial to phenomenology are those of noesis and noema (Moustakas, 1994). Noesis is the psychological experience of an object. It is not the object itself, but the phenomenon of experiencing that object. Noesis is an intentional act of directed consciousness toward something. It is

the act of perceiving, feeling, thinking, remembering, or judging—all of which are embedded with meanings that are concealed and hidden from consciousness. The meanings must be recognized and drawn out. (p. 69)

When we perceive an object, the meanings embedded in our experience of that object are obscured by the experience itself. We see a tree, but do not consciously recognize the meanings that underlie that experience of the tree. It is, in part, the work of phenomenology to draw out and elucidate these hidden meanings in the noesis.

If noesis is *how* a phenomenon is experienced, noema refers to *what* was experienced (Forinash & Grocke, 2005). In any instance of noesis, there is a corresponding noema. Noema is the object in its own givenness as it presents itself (Moustakas, 1994). It is not the object itself in physicality, but the phenomenon of the object's appearance. Accordingly, noema lies between the physical object and the embedded qualities of an object in a subject's experience, or noesis. The noema will change based on perspective, time, circumstance, and condition of the perceiver and the perceived.

The noema-noesis relationship is central to phenomenological inquiry (Moustaka, 1994). The former describes the external perception of objects, while the latter describes internal qualities such as perceptions, associations, and judgments. Through the creative and synthetic development of textural and structural descriptions of a phenomenon, the phenomenological researcher seeks to integrate both noema and noesis into a coherent and unified description of individuals' experiences of the phenomenon under question.

The noema-noesis distinction and relationship requires some elucidation in the phenomenon under question; that is, wilderness imagery in GIM. The central issues—an individual's imagery and the wilderness construct—are wholly subjective.

Wilderness is a construct that is dependent on one's subjective experience of it; there is nothing that is objectively defined as wilderness. In the same way, the individual's GIM imagery is by definition subjective; it is the individual's own internal imaginal world, self-

created imagery. For both issues, their reality exists within the individual's own subjective experience. So, this study will examine the relationship not between the subjective reality of perception and objective reality of the thing itself, but the relationship between subjective reality of the experience, in reflection, and the subjective reality of the experience itself. In this case, the noemata are rooted in experiences of phenomena with subjective, rather than objective bases.

**Transcendental ego.** A foundation of Husserl's Transcendental Phenomenology is the idea of approaching phenomenological description from a pure egoic state (Moustakas, 1994). Using the practice of epoché, described below, the researcher endeavors to transcend all prior knowledge about a phenomenon such as sociocultural constructions, learnings, and prior experiences. This allows for a description of an experience as it is, without distortion from preconceptions or outside influence.

### **Phenomenological Method**

**Epoché.** Phenomenology, particularly Husserl's Transcendental Phenomenology, employs the practice of epoché (Moustakas, 1994). Epoché is of Greek etymology and means to suspend or abstain. In phenomenology, epoché is the suspension or setting aside of all knowledge and preconceived notions about a phenomenon (Forinash & Grocke, 2005; Moustakas, 1994). This allows the researcher to view a phenomenon "naively and freshly through a 'purified' consciousness" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 85). It provides a new perspective unique to that time and place,

holding in abeyance...anything that has been put into our minds by science or society, or government, or other people, especially one's parents, teachers, and authorities, but also one's friends and enemies. (p. 86)

More than a procedure, epoché is a state of openness that facilitates a receptivity to new awarenesses, understandings, and meanings. Through engaging in this process, the researcher allows the experience itself to guide the inquiry, rather than preconceptions about what the experience should entail (Forinash & Grocke, 2005). The research becomes an emergent process based as fully as possible on the experience of the bracketed phenomenon, removed from previous ideas, beliefs, and learnings that are separate from the experience itself (Moustakas, 1994). Again, the focus is on ‘the thing itself’ isolated from the appendages of knowledge in the form of memories and beliefs. Developed by Husserl, the epoché requires an I that transcends I-ness; an individual, personal perspective that is simultaneously removed from the experiences and learnings that make up that individual.

While Moustakas wrote that the epoché is an idealized state that is rarely, if ever, attained, he claimed that the phenomenological researcher must make all efforts toward such an achievement. In reference to Husserl’s position on the transcendent ego, Heidegger wrote,

Not absence of prejudice, which is utopia. The idea of having no prejudice is itself the greatest prejudice. Mastery in the face of each possibility of something establishing itself as prejudice. Not free from prejudices but free for the possibility of giving up a prejudice at the decisive moment on the basis of a critical encounter with the subject matter. That is the form of existence of a scientific human (Heidegger, 1994/2005, p. 2).

Our experiences in such forms as learnings, conceptions, and judgments create a complex web of aggregate meaning. Elements of our past experience are inextricably linked to the way that we perceive in the present moment. Indeed, the tabula rasa of a pure egoic state that Husserl described is not possible to achieve, and to ignore this inevitability is self-deception

and will fail to recognize significant distorting factors in the researcher's inherently distorted perception and description of the phenomenon. Doing so, as Heidegger wrote, sets the researcher up for the greatest prejudice. Using Heidegger's perspective, a researcher will not attempt to transcend preconceptions as a diffuse frame of mind throughout the research process, but instead recognize them with the intention of operating outside of those prejudices at the "decisive moment." For this study, I will employ the epoché, recognizing that the complex set of prejudices and preconceptions will color the lens through which any phenomenon is viewed while at the same time making all efforts at giving up these prejudices with an attitude of openness and receptivity.

**Phenomenological reduction.** Phenomenological Reduction is the process of creating a textural description of the phenomenon and consists of bracketing, horizontalizing, creating invariant meaning units, clustering, and synthesizing (Moustakas, 1994). A textural description consists of qualities of varying intensities such as size, shape, and spatial elements, emotional valence, and any other experiential descriptor. This set of descriptors addresses both the object being perceived and the act of consciousness; the noema and noesis.

The first step in phenomenological reduction, bracketing, occurs when a phenomenon is set apart as a self-contained experience (Moustakas, 1994). In this step, reality is split into phenomena that may be studied as experiences in themselves. Once the phenomenon is bracketed, the experience of this phenomena may be described beginning with horizontalizing.

Horizontalizing is the process of differentiating statements that give distinctive character to the phenomenon. The term refers to the simultaneously infinite and transient



nature of these distinctive characteristics. They are experienced as an observer watches an ever-shifting horizon. We can view the horizon, but never fully experience it; as we shift, so the horizon shifts. It paints our experience, gives it distinctive character and helps us to better understand the experience. In phenomenological reduction, a description is divided into these fleeting qualities that characterize the experience. Each horizon is given equal weight in the description and viewed with an open mind.

After the description is horizontalized, the distinctive characteristics of the experience are divided into Horizons, or invariant meaning units (Moustakas, 1994). All repetitive or, redundant, or statements not germane to the topic are discarded, leaving a set of statements that provide a complete and distilled description of the experience. These invariant meaning units are then clustered into themes that point toward an emergent organization of the experience. The researcher then synthesizes the invariant meaning units and themes into a full and coherent textural description of the phenomenon.

**Imaginative variation.** Imaginative variation, also called *free phantasie variation*, is the process of creating a structural description of the phenomenon (Forinash & Grocke, 2005; Moustakas, 1994). The task of this step in phenomenological research is

to seek possible meanings through the utilization of imagination, varying the frames of reference, employing polarities and reversals, and approaching the phenomenon from divergent perspectives, different positions, roles, or functions. (Moustakas, 1994, p. 97)

With imaginativeness and openness, the researcher seeks to determine the structure that underlies the texture of the experience; in other words, the conditions that must exist in order for that experience to be perceived as such. Some possible dimensions to be considered are

varied structures and combinations of structures that underlie the textures of the experience or are required for the experience itself to emerge, universal structures that precipitate elements of the experience, and specific manifestations of the structural elements. After creative, imaginative, and open consideration of these structures, the researcher synthesizes them into a structural description of the phenomenon.

**Synthesis.** The final step in phenomenological analysis is integrating the textural and structural descriptions into a coherent and unified description of the phenomenon as a whole (Moustakas, 1994). This integrated statement will incorporate meanings and essences derived from individuals' experiences of the phenomenon. Further, synthesizing multiple individuals' experiences of the same phenomenon may allow the researcher to triangulate the essences of a phenomenon that begin to transcend individual differences.

### **Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to gain a greater understanding of the experiences of wilderness imagery of healthy adults who have had a series of GIM sessions. This study utilized phenomenological inquiry methodology in order to gain this understanding. The research question was this: How do GIM clients describe their experiences of wilderness imagery from GIM sessions? The key words in this research question are *how*, *GIM clients*, *describe*, *experiences*, *wilderness*, *imagery*, and *from GIM sessions*.

**How.** The word *how* represents the investigational foundation of this study. This study sought to understand the dimensions and dynamics of the phenomena under examination. This word denotes process-based nature of the data, rather than the *what* of the

phenomena. Additionally, the word *how* indicates an openness to the emerging process of the inquiry.

**GIM clients.** The subject of this research question sentence is *GIM clients*. This articulates a clear population with whom this investigation may be undertaken.

**Describe.** The word *describe* denotes the type of data that will be collected and analyzed. Under examination will be *what* composed the experience. This word also means that the data will be retrospective. A phenomenon may only be described *after* it as entered an individual's consciousness.

**Experiences.** The word *experiences* accounts for the multiple instances of wilderness imagery that may come about in a single GIM session. These instances may be in the foreground of the client's awareness, or may be less prominent; in any case, the instance is experienced at some level of conscious awareness. It also indicates an openness to the myriad ways in which this phenomenon may manifest in a client's imagery. *Experiences* also puts the focus on the intentional act of the wilderness image coming into the client's consciousness. This investigation will seek to better understand the client's own experience of wilderness imagery, rather than the nature of the wilderness imagery as an entity in itself.

**Wilderness.** The term *wilderness* is, as has been delineated, a problematic one. For the purposes of this study, this word is used in reference to the operational definition of wilderness given above: wilderness is one end of a spectrum describing the degree to which a setting or object involves the influence of human civilization. Phenomena situated at the end of the spectrum opposite human civilization are wilderness.

**Imagery.** The word *imagery* is used in the broad sense delineated previously in this chapter. Imagery is an interior imaginal experience. Within this study, it occurs during the music portion of a GIM session.

**From GIM sessions.** Finally, *from GIM sessions* refers to the specific context of the imagery under investigation. Participants will be asked to describe a type of imagery that they may have experienced specifically during a GIM session

A language unit that has been omitted from the research question is the specific context within which the client's description of the imagery will occur. This is intentional, as it acknowledges the cumulative nature of understanding through the reflective and recollective process. This study sought to understand how an individual describes an experience from a GIM session and this description will be elicited within the context of a research interview. However, the participant's descriptions of these experiences are inevitably altered by accumulated memories, associations, interactions, and reflections in the time between the experience itself and the interview. Accordingly, this research question acknowledged that while the meaning was collected in a specific setting and referred to a specific time-limited experience, the description is based in the wider context of the client's full aggregate of experiences, relationships, and psychological processes.

## Chapter 2

### Review of Literature

As stated in the Introduction, there has been no scholarship on wilderness or nature imagery in GIM. Instead, these two streams require a closer look independently. There will be two central tasks in this chapter: to examine in more detail the use of imagery, particularly in therapy; and to review how scholars have described our experiences of wilderness.<sup>2</sup> For the former task, this chapter will bring together scholarship on the history of, techniques, and rationale for using imagery for health. These findings are then summarized in terms of relevance to the Bonny Method of Guided Imagery and Music.

For the latter task, this literature review will examine publications from the fields of environmental history, ecopsychology, and ecophilosophy for scholarship on the human experience of wilderness. The delineations of these fields are blurred in some cases due to the overlapping nature of issues and perspectives. They have been organized based on the author's approach, discipline, and central aims in the work. Emergent themes are then drawn together in conclusion. In doing so, this review will examine theoretical conceptualizations of experiences of wilderness.

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<sup>2</sup> While art history may have much to say regarding wilderness and imagery, the non-clinical and somewhat insular nature of art history places this discussion beyond the scope of this study. There is, to date, no literature explicitly linking art therapy and wilderness imagery.

The organizational decision to refrain from putting these two independent streams of scholarship into direct conversation in this chapter reflects the current state of the field. Indeed, this points to the importance of such a study at this time. This conversation, albeit delayed, will be revisited in the Discussion.

## **Imagery**

### **Definitions of Imagery**

While the vernacular use of the term imagery tends to be most closely associated with visual images, the term may be more broadly defined. It includes the whole spectrum of human experience, when produced without the otherwise requisite external stimuli for producing that experience (Achterberg, 1985; Assagioli, 1971; McMahon & Sheikh, 2002). This includes any evocation of the senses, experiences of movement, memories, narrative thought, and future-oriented thought.

Singer (2006) wrote about the breadth of the imagery experience in human consciousness: “Human emotions are aroused not only by our externally generated events but by the continuously reverberating rehearsals of memories, appraisals of current situations, and fantasies of future situations that make up our ongoing stream of thought” (p. 27). Each of these processes that Singer noted requires the individual to hold an image. For a human being to hang onto any perceptual experience, it must move from a perceptual experience to a reflective experience. The act of holding that experience in one's consciousness in that reflective mode is imagery. Any re-engagement with that perceptual experience is an imagined experience, whatever the sensory modalities involved. This ability also allows humans to project expectations or possibilities into the future, holding that projected image in their mind's eye. Thus, any narrative of past or future experiences must necessarily involve

some modality of internal imagery. We have the ability to project future possibilities, but also alternate possibilities in the past or present, indeed, in modes that transcend time and place.

Imagery experiences are often complex and multidimensional (Assagioli, 1971; (Bonny, 1987/2002e). Beyond integrating various sensory modalities, “imagination can operate at several levels concurrently; those of sensation, feeling, thinking, and intuition” (Assagioli, 1971, p. 143). There is a participatory nature to these multidimensional experiences: individuals act within the image, rather than simply talking about it (Samuels & Samuels, 1975). This participatory element can be empowering to those seeking healing. By engaging in imagery techniques directed towards health, the individual directly participates in their own healing process (Achterberg, 1985).

### **Directed Versus Spontaneous Imagery**

**Directed Imagery.** Imagery may be directed or spontaneous. Prime examples of directed imagery approaches come from the cognitive-behavioral paradigm, for instance, imagery of anxiety-producing situations to work toward desensitization (Singer, 2006). Other directed imagery approaches described by Assagioli (1971) and Samuels and Samuels (1975) may also include images of the future for motivation or behavior change. However, directed imagery may also be utilized in narrative or experiential approaches to therapy. One example is Conception Imagery Exercise, which combines intermodal arts for exploring inner imagery (Stokes & Stokes, 2002). The clients follow directed suggestions in order to recall and re-experience events from their past, leading up to the moment of their conception. While the images may come from either the conscious or unconscious, the parameters for the imagery experiences are quite contained and directed. With directed imagery, transformation of the individual is made possible through formation and contact with the image. The imagery itself

may come from any source, but the image itself is contained to a dictated, pre-determined context. Guided imagery without a pre-determined outcome such as a client-generated ending to a journey would have elements of both directed and spontaneous imagery.

**Spontaneous Imagery.** Images may arise without being directed by a pre-determined structure. A prime example of a spontaneous imagery technique is Jung's Active Imagination (Jung & Bennet, 1970). This method began with inducing a relaxed physical state, followed by a client speaking aloud a spontaneous narrative of imagery. While dreams tended to be a greater focus in earlier phases of analysis, imagery work tended to replace dreams in later stages. Of this process, Jung stated, "You get all the material in a creative form, and this has great advantages over dream-material. It quickens the process of maturation, for analysis is a process of quickened maturation" (p. 194). Beyond this quickening process, Jung wrote that imagery contains more than dreams contain, such as heightened feeling content. By working through therapeutic issues with archetypal imagery in Active Imagination, the client may experience healing and growth through a process of sublimation from the unconscious to the conscious mind without ever becoming overwhelming, slowly leading to therapeutic growth.

Samuels and Samuels (1975) also described a method of receptive imagery that, in essence, is spontaneous and non-directive, and appears quite similar to Jung's Active Imagination, though absent the analyst. Other methods of spontaneous imagery include the Onierotherapies (Much & Sheikh, 2002). These dream-like approaches include Fretigny and Virel's *reve eveille direge*, as well as Hans Carl Leuner's Guided Affective Imagery, a predecessor of the Bonny Method of Guided Imagery and Music.

Gendlin's *Focusing Techniques* are also spontaneous imagery techniques that utilize imagery experiences in the moment for working with the felt self of bodily awareness and the



problems that arise (Tynion, 2002). Progoff's work includes spontaneous, unguided images that one records in a notebook (Naviaux, 2002). A focus in this method is the constant movement of images through the psyche.

### **Conscious Versus Unconscious Imagery**

Imagery may arise both from an individual's conscious and from the unconscious (Achterberg, 1985; Assagioli, 1971; Jung & Bennet, 1970; McMahon & Sheikh, 2002). Assagioli drew a distinction between the sources of directed imagery and spontaneous imagery. The former, he wrote, is largely conscious, while the latter draws largely on the unconscious. Both conscious and unconscious processes have been shown to have therapeutic worth (Achterberg, 1985; Jung & Bennet, 1970; McMahon & Sheikh, 2002; Samuels & Samuels, 1975; Singer, 2006). Imagery from the unconscious may have several unique benefits. Samuels and Samuels noted that "releasing an image from the unconscious and bringing it to awareness seems to be a basic growth process in the inner world" (p. 182). Additionally, images from the unconscious may function as messages to the conscious self, helping to inform one's actions and decisions. Jung found it crucial to work with imagery from unconscious, rather than conscious, sources. He wrote that "images have a life of their own and . . . the symbolic events develop according to their own logic—that is, of course, if your unconscious reason does not interfere. . . . We can really produce precious little by our conscious mind" (Jung & Bennet, 1970, p. 193).

### **Categories of Imagery**

Achterberg (1985) distinguished two categories of imagery as used in health processes: preverbal imagery and transpersonal imagery. In preverbal imagery,

The imagination acts upon one's own physical being. Images communicate with

tissues and organs, even cells, to effect a change. The communication can be deliberate or not. It is preverbal in the sense that it probably evolved much earlier than language, and uses different neural pathways for the transmission of information. (p. 5)

Transpersonal imagery assumes that imagery in one individual's consciousness can transfer into another's, thereby effecting change. This type of imagery is the core of practices such as shamanism. While preverbal imagery can be and has been studied by current scientific methods, Achterberg wrote that transpersonal imagery cannot be.

Summer (1988) differentiated four levels of imagery specifically in the context of the Bonny Method of Guided Imagery and Music: abstract/aesthetic, psychodynamic, perinatal, and transpersonal experiences. Abstract/aesthetic experiences include enhanced appreciation of sensory experiences, as well as more ordinary images. Psychodynamic experiences include "literal, repressed memories; experiences of conflicts (especially interpersonal); [and] insights regarding aspects of one's life as symbolized in the imagery" (p. 25). Here, clients often "confront their primary relationships, such as their parents, through actual or symbolic imagery" (p. 25). In this level of imagery, an individual has opportunities to clarify and work through defenses, resolve conflicts or problematic memories, and find solutions for the future. Perinatal experiences include "somatic and existential experiences" including "birth, death, and rebirth, as well as awareness and memories of body trauma and disease" (p. 25). These experiences, which often are the furthest a client will go in therapy, provide opportunities for the individual to uncover and resolve physical or psychological tensions, as well as engage their own inner healing processes. Summer's final category of images, transpersonal experiences, often may manifest as peak experiences. These experiences

“unite the mind and body in a revelatory aura which transcends the boundaries of the other three levels in the quest of ultimate truths” (p. 26). There is a spiritual element to this level of imagery, which may often come with a sense of ineffability.

### **Imagery, Body, and Mind**

Imagery, Singer (2006) wrote, may impact both our psychological and physical health. Similarly, Assagioli (1971) wrote that imagery has a “motor tendency” (p. 145) in which imaging “tends to produce the physical conditions and the external acts corresponding to them” (p. 144). Achterberg (1985) described this in greater detail, grounded in the biochemical processes by which images effect physiological change. “Images,” she wrote, “are electrochemical events, which are intricately woven into the fabric of the brain and body” (p. 9). Imagining a particular activity causes the neural networks associated with that activity to fire rapidly enough that the body and mind experience that activity as having actually occurred. These effects extend to the somatic nervous system, responsible for our musculoskeletal system, as well as to the autonomic nervous systems, which is responsible for the body’s regulation activities. This means that imagery affects our interior selves as well as our interactions with the external world, giving credence to Samuels and Samuels’ (1975) claim that “an image held in the mind becomes manifest in the outer world” (p. 181).

Not only can images initiate physiological states; physiological states can initiate imagery experiences (Achterberg, 1985). Images and physiological states directly affect one another, suggesting that there is reciprocal communication involving imagery experiences and physiology. Achterberg expanded on this, writing that there is an image-contingent system of communication within the entirety of the human system, saying that imagery “is the communication mechanism between perception, emotion, and bodily change” (p. 3).

Images form the bridge, or transition point, between cognitive processing and physiological changes, largely dependent on brain hemisphere differences. The left brain hemisphere is more dominant in linear language processing, while the right hemisphere is more dominant in image-based, nonverbal, nonlinear processing. The right hemisphere also has the majority of the connections with the limbic system, which regulates the autonomic nervous system. So, verbal content must, at least to a certain extent, be translated into more image-based content in order to communicate with the autonomic system through the limbic system, thereby creating physiological responses to emotionally charged content.

The reverse also holds true for the translation of images into verbal content, or indeed for the role of imagery in translating physio-emotional states into verbal content (Achterberg, 1985). In this way, imagery mediates between processes in the body and in the mind. By doing so, imagery provides for the real experiences of both internal and external events whether or not the associated event actually occurs.

Samuels and Samuels (1975) articulated this in a different way, writing that imagery, or visualization, allows an individual to translate abstract ideas into non-verbal knowings that can then be incorporated into the imager's being. It is the way in which abstract thought in the form of language is translated into body knowledge.

Beyond these direct effects, imagery allows one to intensify experiences (Samuels & Samuels, 1975). This is largely due to the focus that can accompany imagery experiences. When an individual engages in visualization of imagery, that individual enters into a more focused state of concentration. It is the only awareness held in his or her mind. This allows that individual to engage with the image in a multidimensional way that he or she could not have done otherwise. Samuels and Samuels call this the "one-pointedness of mind" (p. 65) in

which the imager's consciousness is taken out of his or her ego-attachment and drawn into the object of the imagery. Through this, the imager experiences new awarenesses and understandings, as well as physiological responses.

### **Imagery in Therapy**

With the established points that imagery affects an individual's whole being, it should be no surprise that healers have used imagery since the beginning of recorded human civilization (Achterberg, 1985). Such methods have been employed by a wide range of healers in a wide range of contexts, before taking the forms employed in contemporary psychotherapy.

**Historical Perspective.** Samuels and Samuels (1975) wrote that “philosophers and priests in every ancient culture used visualization as a tool for growth and rebirth” (p. 21). This has taken a wide range of forms, depending on culture, worldview, and technologies available. Shamans, in particular, have appeared throughout the extent of recorded human history as individuals who can heal through using the imagination (Achterberg, 1985). Through altered states and culturally-embedded understandings of health, the shaman traveled to the world beyond, bringing back the tools for communicating health, or disease. The Grecian era saw the height of the use of dreams and visions as diagnostic and therapeutic tools (McMahon & Sheikh, 2002). McMahon and Sheikh pointed to the use of image arousal theory in this premodern clinical practice for diagnosis, treatment, and health maintenance. By removing a pathological image or imprinting a healthy image into the patient's consciousness, the clinician was able to alleviate the pathological condition. In the dark ages, wise women, or witches, healed with the imagination (Achterberg, 1985).

McMahon and Sheikh (2002) also pointed to the placebo effect, recognized at least as early as the renaissance by empiricists reconciling the effectiveness of magic or faith-based cures with their rationalist perspectives. With sufficient faith in the physician, a patient would accept a belief-based treatment that functioned through a manifestation of the cure in the patient's imagination.

Imagery as a therapeutic tool receded with the rise of Cartesian dualism (Achterberg, 1985; McMahon & Sheikh, 2002). Before the mind and body were divided in Descartes' philosophy, medical or therapeutic approaches were holistic; mind, body, and spirit were not thought of as essentially separate (Achterberg, 1985). With the rise of Cartesian dualism, these became separate parts of an individual, and holistic thinking became inconsistent with this worldview. Accordingly, techniques that assumed the integration of the mind and body, such as imagery, receded from therapeutic practice. Imagery has again risen in prominence in the healing professions in the last century as the mind and body, which were split under Cartesian dualism, have begun to be reunited.

### **Imagery in Contemporary Psychotherapy.**

In contemporary healthcare, imagery is used for a broad range of applications (Achterberg, 1985; Singer, 2006). The following section includes various rationales as well as a range of uses for using imagery in psychotherapy.

***Rationale.*** Based on the methods in which imagery is used in current psychotherapy practice, McMahon and Sheikh (2002) provided a number of bases for the efficacy of using imagery in therapy, highlighted below:

- An imagery experience is “psychologically equivalent” (p. 19) to experiences in consensual reality in both psychological and physiological ways. This echoes a point discussed above (Achterberg, 1985; Samuels & Samuels, 1975; Singer, 2006).
- On a psychological level, images of potential outcomes can provide motivation for action (McMahon & Sheikh, 2002).
- An image response to language allows an emotional response to that language. Once the language is translated into an image, it may be held temporally and responded to.
- Images can function as a hologram in which meaning, behavior, experience, and thought are integrated
- Images contain detail about past experiences that tend to be absent in abstracted language.
- Images may help an individual to recover memories that occurred before the individual developed sufficient language skills.
- Images will get to the issue of the moment.
- Images invite a more complex and multidimensional emotional response than verbal language.
- Imagery experiences produce physiological responses.
- Imagery can help a client continue when a client has exhausted their ability to describe or express something verbally.
- Free and spontaneous imagery can help bypass a client's defenses.
- Because images need not be understood consciously, as words must be, images tend to connect the client to their unconscious.

These factors make imagery extraordinarily useful in psychotherapy. The breadth of these factors enables therapists from a wide variety of theoretical orientations, as well as clients with a wide variety of needs, to benefit from using imagery.

Achterberg (1985) offered four ways that images function in health care. The first occurs whenever a patient interacts with a health care professional. These conversations or interactions inevitably bring some image to mind that can alter the course of the illness or injury. Second, images are once again being used in diagnosis. “Because of their intimate contact with the physical body, images appear to express a body of wisdom, an understanding of both the status and prognosis of health” (Achterberg, 1985, p. 8). A third way is when images are used as the therapy itself, for example, in psychotherapy or immunology. The fourth way that Achterberg noted is when imagery is used to rehearse events that cause fear or anxiety, calling to mind cognitive-behavioral approaches.

There is an element of control in the use of imagery for psychotherapy. Samuels and Samuels (1975) wrote that “visualization is a tool people can use to create a day-to-day life in harmony with their inner vision. It allows people to gain an element of control over their world and to shape their daily life into something more beautiful and enjoyable” (p. 179). Imagery in therapy can also “pierce resistances surprisingly quickly and uncover deeply disturbing emotional content with which the individual may be unprepared to cope” (Sheikh, 2002, p. vii).

It is not just the image itself, but the *process* of the image that holds therapeutic value (Shaffer, 2002). Working with and through imagery allows for transformation of that image for therapeutic growth. Whereas transformation of the individual is made possible in directed imagery through formation and contact with the image, with spontaneous imagery



therapeutic growth is often revealed through transformation of *the image itself* (Körlin, 2002; Merritt, 1993). It is a process-oriented mode of therapy, rather than action-oriented<sup>3</sup>. Clearly, the rationale for using imagery in therapy will depend largely on the ways in which imagery is used. Imagery is currently used in a wide variety of therapeutic approaches, outlined below.

*Uses.* Singer (2006) wrote that imagery is used in most theoretical approaches to psychotherapy. He identified two strains of psychotherapy that utilize imagery differently: “rational thought and cognitive approaches” and approaches that emphasize “narrative experiential imagery” (p. 69). These psychotherapy approaches are distinguished primarily by the degree to which the use of imagery is action-oriented versus narrative or experiential.

Action-orientated therapies such as cognitive-behavior therapy involve specific and directed imagery (Singer, 2006). These approaches rely on the client’s ability to mentally reproduce, describe, and manipulate scenarios from the past or future. For instance, systematic desensitization relies largely on the imagined experience of settings and scenarios of which the client is fearful. Singer outlined a broad range of image-based approaches in cognitive-behavioral therapies in which the imagery may be utilized for three general purposes. A client develops control over his or her images through rehearsal and modification of images, rehearses coping strategies through internal imagery, and is given opportunities for reframing a problem.

Conversely, imagery in current narrative and experiential therapies tend to focus on therapeutic narrative, rather than action (Singer, 2006). This manifests in work with dreams and fantasy, as well as imagining new ways of being through role-playing. Narrative and

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<sup>3</sup> Action-oriented is used as Singer (2006) defines it: therapies targeted towards planned and quantifiable action.

recollective techniques in therapy necessarily utilize imagery. When an individual recalls a memory or engages in any type of fantasy, “one temporarily inhabits the context of that event” (pp. 165-166). These therapies, such as psychodynamic, Gestalt, and existential/humanistic therapies, typically begin with the client telling his or her story, which requires a process of narrative imagery. Further, imagery methods in these narrative/experiential therapies can assist with identifying a client’s resistances and defenses through eliciting more detailed images in a narrative in which the client hesitates or omits details. Such imagery may also help the client and therapist to identify transferences. In a more projective use of imagery, those approaches that stem most directly from Jung’s work “have the greatest concern with the evocation of fantasy material linked to a presumed rich unconscious life” (p. 79). For instance, Singer described the “guided waking dream method” (p. 79) in which a client, after a period of guided relaxation, images to a script provided by the therapist. Singer described the imagery techniques used in such experiential methods as “free-floating” relative to action-oriented therapies (p. 79). It is noteworthy that while directed imagery experiences may be utilized in both action-orientated and narrative experiential therapeutic approaches, spontaneous imagery experiences tend to be utilized only in narrative experiential approaches.

### **Summary**

Imagery has been used throughout recorded human history for health, both in diagnosis and treatment (Achterberg, 1985; McMahon & Sheikh, 2002). It creates and reflects real physical and psychological experiences without the external stimuli that would otherwise produce those conditions (Achterberg, 1985; Assagioli, 1971; McMahon & Sheikh, 2002; Samuels & Samuels, 1975). Indeed, these imagery experiences are often more

vivid and fully experienced due to the concentration required for such experiences (Samuels & Samuels, 1975). Imagery is currently being used successfully in a wide range of psychotherapies, from the most action-oriented to narrative-experiential therapies (Singer, 2006).

The Bonny Method of Guided Imagery and Music (GIM) is a therapy method that employs spontaneous, undirected imagery. It fits, generally, into the category of narrative-experiential therapies (Singer, 2006). Practitioners of GIM facilitate spontaneous imagery experiences (Ventre, 2002). It has a heavy emphasis on unconscious imagery (Bush, 1995; Summer, 1988) and can lead to real manifestations of psychological and physiological experiences (see McKinney, 2002 for a review). Hence, it is crucial to explore in greater depth the types of imagery that clients experience within GIM.

## **Wilderness Perspectives**

### **Environmental History**

Cronon (1995) wrote about the problematic nature of the term wilderness, tracing the ways that humans have understood the term. He wrote that wilderness is a construction that reveals our own unrecognized desires and urges. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, wilderness was primarily understood as a deserted, barren wasteland or a place of temptation. As the American West was settled, Cronon wrote, the idea of wilderness was domesticated. Wilderness retained elements of the sacred and sublime, but the fear was taken out of it. Wilderness instead became a symbol for the wild freedom that had become a central part of the national American identity. It was a place where man could be true Man, as he is before civilization corrupts his true nature. This introduced the issue of wilderness as an arena for the essential and true nature of humans; in wilderness, the individual experiences their

essential qualities. On a cultural construction level, Cronon wrote that by taking on the qualities of what humans idealized about their true nature, wilderness became an amplification of certain cultural values.

Merchant (1995) discussed wilderness in terms of ascensionist and declensionist narratives. In ascensionist narratives, nature is an agent of improvement or growth; the wilderness is associated with fertility, generativity, or the process of transforming a desert into a garden. Here, nature has a positive valence. Even death is seen as a transformative process that results in new life. All elements of nature carry a capacity for sustenance and generativity. The declensionist narrative for wilderness is that of the Fall. The end result of such a narrative is a poorer state than the beginning. Nature has a negative valence, and is something that must be struggled against. Merchant went on to write that the controlling or transforming process of the human endeavor turns the lapsarian story into one of recovery; it changes from declensionist to ascensionist through human agency. An example of this narrative is Manifest Destiny. Through determination and skill, humans endeavored to transform the American West into a paradise; through human control, the wasteland could be turned into a garden.

These two narrative arcs characterize vastly different experiences of wilderness (Merchant, 1995). In one, the environment is collaborative and helps sustain those that work with it. It is experienced as a place of healing and growth. The second narrative arc sets the environment in opposition to humans. The environment is a place of destruction and desolation that must be struggled against and, if possible, overcome.

Merchant's (1995) discussion of experiences of the environment was on a large-scale sociocultural level. She examined pervasive attitudes, rather than an individual's isolated

experience of the wilderness. Still, she provided two narratives—ascensionist and declensionist—that attribute particular characteristics to the environment-human relationship that shed light on the trajectories of how individual experiences of the wilderness might manifest.

In his book, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, Nash (2001) identified two primary ascensionist conceptualizations of wilderness found in Western civilization. The first is as “a sanctuary from a sinful and persecuting society” (p. 16). While there is no focus on *naturalness* or essential qualities, this conceptualization assumes that separation from society will lead to a different experience of being. By escaping to the wilderness from the corruptions of society, it is assumed that the wilderness state is more pure. The second conceptualization that he presented is wilderness as a place to come closer to a god or undergo trials. Here, wilderness is place for the pilgrim or seeker rather than refugee. It is a place to be actively sought out for the qualities found there, rather than absence of qualities found elsewhere. In conceptualizations, wilderness is a place of purity away from society. It is a place to come into communion with the Absolute apart from the influence of culture and civilization. Here, wilderness is experienced in both positive and negative valences. Like Cronon (1995), Nash (2001) associated wilderness with experiences of the divine that have corresponding positive qualities like experiences of the sublime and negative qualities such as fear or destruction. Extending this point to the contemporary issue, Nash also wrote that wilderness is the solution for dealing with the psychological problems of cities and civilization, including corruption of the mind. For him, wilderness can be experienced as a salve, or therapy for the troubles of civilization. This argument relies on the idea of the fundamental separation of wilderness from society or civilization.

Another pertinent stream that Nash (2001) discussed was the dichotomization typically embedded in the concept of wilderness. He wrote that wilderness came about only with the development of agriculture and domestication. This created the distinction between cultivated and uncultivated land. Where the environment was before a complex set of interconnections, it became dichotomized into wild and civilized, setting up clear boundaries for the civilized human. Hence, wilderness would be experienced as that which lies beyond the civilized. It is experienced as a place beyond cultivation, domestication, or human influence.

A literary theorist that has articulated this dichotomized experience of wilderness is Frye (1957). He contrasted two separate worlds: the closed world of human civilization, and the *green world* of the space beyond civilization. In literature, the *green world* is beyond the city or farm and in the wilderness. The *green world* is a magical place of metamorphosis, separate from the human world and set apart from socio-cultural constructions. One must disappear into the green world, undergo transformation or resolution, and then return to the human world. Action in the *green world* transcends social order constructs, but is not anarchical; the *green world* has its own order, but based on an alternate system. The *green world* also is associated with fertility and ritual, as well as a type of dream world in which our desires are made manifest.

The *green world* may also be a more natural form of the world that human civilization imitates or approximates (Frye, 1957). This conceptualization of wilderness experience is a larger scale version of the *natural form* argument introduced by Nash (2001) and continued in the following pages. Where others wrote that wilderness allows the individual to become more in tune with basic instincts and urges, the *natural form* version of

the *green world* is an idealized, more natural form of a larger system. So, experiencing the wilderness may be a return to the platonic form of the cosmos before it is instantiated and inevitably corrupted.

Shepard (1992) also elaborated on wilderness as opposed to domestication and landscape. He contrasted what he described as current views of wilderness with Paleolithic conceptions of nature. For us, wilderness is

a departure into a kind of therapeutic land management, a release from our crowded and overbuilt environment, an esthetic balm, healing to those who sense the presence of the disease but who may have confused its cause with the absence of therapy. (p. 70)

Immediately apparent is the critical tone that Shepard took, writing that wilderness is something that we hold in esteem only as an escape, or even a mode of therapy to cure the ailments brought about by life within human civilization. Within Shepard's statement is an implicit acknowledgment of the healing nature of wilderness and how humans are drawn to it. Here, wilderness is a hedonic environmental foil for our own civilization in that we interact with wilderness as a way of augmenting our own civilized selves.

Shepard (1992) also discussed the way that we view wilderness. He described a change in paintings between Paleolithic and Mesolithic periods. In comparison to Paleolithic paintings, Mesolithic paintings were much smaller pictures of scenes, shrunken from those in Paleolithic art. These shrunken images psychologically set the viewer at a greater distance from the scene that is pictured, creating a sense of being removed from that scene. This, Shepard argued, signifies a process of psychological separation from the environment. As

human civilization developed more centrality and domestication, there began a divide between what is domesticated and what was not—what was wild.

Shepard (1992) wrote of the disconnect between aboriginal cultures' focus on interconnections and our anonymous scenery conception of wilderness. Using the Australian Aborigines as an example, Shepard wrote that their conception of the wilderness is a vast and complex series of interconnections – it is a system. In contrast, current western culture's conception of wilderness tends to focus on place or setting. The fundamental difference, he argued, is the invention of the landscape. It is a place to view, rather than a space in which to be. It is a voyeuristic understanding of wilderness, rather than participatory. Further, it is consumer-oriented in that this type of wilderness can be created, divorced from its true context through examples like an anonymous picture of a landscape on a calendar, and in a sense, domesticated through human control. This corporate landscape nature aesthetic has replaced true wildness—a place where genetic factors are not controlled by human intention—for the meaning of the word wilderness. Accordingly, wilderness may be experienced as an anonymous setting or landscape, rather than as a series of interconnections.

### **Ecopsychology**

Grange (1977) posited a distinction between what he called dividend ecology and foundational ecology. Dividend ecology, he wrote, occurs when humans tend to sustainable environmental management for the benefits that it will have for humans. This may take self-serving forms and altruistic forms. For example, the hunting enthusiast preserves wilderness so that he may continue to hunt, and the activist fights to preserve wilderness so that generations to come will be able to experience wilderness. In either case, Grange wrote, the primary motivation for preservation and conservation is fear of that which would result from



depleting resources. For both parties, wilderness is held in esteem for that which it provides; it is a use-oriented relationship. Wilderness is not experienced as a place with intrinsic value, but as a place or setting to be utilized.

In opposition to dividend ecology, Grange (1977) proposed foundational ecology that consists of “opening up to nature” (p. 148). Foundational ecology holds that there is intrinsic value to life and recognizes an inherent connectedness with nature. When experienced in this way, wilderness may be separate from the human observer by degrees, but connected with that observer at some level. There is sameness, rather than separateness, in this interconnectedness.

Indeed, Grange (1977) wrote, humans fundamentally seek to be close to that which is closed off. He argued that we seek to have an experience of the world, which is initially separate from the human existence. Through our embodied consciousness and rootedness in place, we come into contact with the earth; the bridge between our consciousness and the earth is the conscious experience of ourselves in the world. The intentional act of becoming aware of one’s experience in nature creates this sense of interconnectedness that Grange wrote humans naturally seek. So, to Grange, the distinction comes down to relating to the environment as a separate object to be valued for secondary purposes such as use or enjoyment or to becoming conscious of the environment as part of the interconnected whole through the embodied act of consciousness.

Sigurd Olson (Olson & Backes, 2001), naturalist and environmental writer, wrote about wilderness as a place for men to struggle and overcome. Olson wrote

I have seen them come to the “jumping off places” of the North, these men whereof I speak. I have seen the hunger in their eyes, the torturing hunger for action, distance,

and solitude, and a chance to live as they will. I know these men and the craving that is theirs; I know also that in the world today there are only two types of experience which can put their minds at peace, the way of wilderness or the way of war. (p. 41)

Olson's men experienced wilderness as this 'jumping off place' in which one leaves the safety, comfort, predictability, and company of civilization. Wilderness becomes both the setting for a battle of survival as well as an object to be overcome. The experience is one that speaks of adrenaline and self-reliance. For him, experience of wilderness is a container for what men should be. It is a place to be natural, to satisfy primal urges without relying on that which civilization may offer. In contrast to Nash (2001), Olson offered a vastly different take on wilderness as container for human's essential nature. Still, both positions view the wilderness experience as one of closer contact with the fundamental nature of humans when separated from the influences of civilization.

Olson wrote that the depth of the experience surpasses the joy of being in wilderness settings—there is a prototypically masculine interaction with those surroundings (Olson & Backes, 2001). There is struggle “where the odds are real and where they know that they are no longer playing make believe” (p. 46). In this description of the experience, the dangers of wilderness are felt to be more real, more present than the dangers of civilization. This danger, and the exhilaration that it stimulates, becomes central in the experience of wilderness. Taken this way, that which in Olson's view is natural is equated with dealing with, and presumably overcoming, danger. The natural elements are seen to act in direct opposition to the needs of man, and the struggle that ensues is experienced as transcendent, genuine, and natural.

For Olson, wilderness is experienced as essentially a game setting (Olson & Backes, 2001). It provides a set of experiences that we cannot have in civilization. It affords

aesthetically pleasing experiences while simultaneously stripping away supports or comforts, requiring the individual to become self-sufficient. So for Olson, wilderness experiences are even less interconnected to other humans than civilized experiences.

Olson (Olson & Backes, 2001) also wrote about wilderness as a place for transcendence. In wilderness, “Men are conscious of a unity with the primal forces of creation and all life that swiftly annihilates the feeling of futility, frustration, and unreality” (p. 46). As for Nash (2011), this transcendence holds the sublime and the terrible. Hence, wilderness is experienced in two quite different ways. The first is a way of releasing energy and urges that go unsatisfied in civilization. The other is through spiritual satisfaction through trials and hardship.

In an article on defining the concept of wildness, Cookson (2011) described wilderness as symbol for the pure and the natural. It is an interconnected system of entities behaving in ways that Cookson terms *wildness*. “Wildness draws upon base natures but can only work properly when those base natures are direct and honest. Only then can the result of wildness be supported by and beneficial to the system housing that organism” (p. 188). Wilderness is an arena for exploring this process of wildness. Then, an experience of wilderness is an experience of being honest, direct, spontaneous, and instinctive. To Cookson, experiencing the feeling of wilderness means being a part of an interactive system of wild entities, each with their own high level of clarity and action based on base motivations or essential qualities. This wildness that the individual experiences is “a process that does not allow confusion, padding, phoniness, and avoidance. It sorts to produce clarity, simplicity, and parsimony” (Cookson, 2001, p. 189). Unless humans can use the quality of wildness constructively, humans are forced to disown it and make it *other*.

Two central elements to Cookson's (2011) arguments are naturalness and interactivity. Wilderness, and thus wildness, requires one to act upon base instincts and desires, what is "natural." Cookson does not specify what these behaviors might be for humans, though he does qualify them as being honest and authentic. Like Olson (Olson & Backes, 2001), the *natural* state that one experiences in wilderness is assumed to be different and superior to that of civilization. The second element, interactivity, brings focus to the system in which the wild individual operates (Cookson, 2011). To experience wilderness means to experience being an interactive participant in this system, rather than just an observer. This point rings of Shepard's (1992) discussion contrasting the aboriginal focus on wilderness as a series of interconnections with contemporary Western civilization's landscape aesthetic of wilderness.

In an article exploring attachment theory and the environment, Jordan (2009) explicated a psychodynamic approach to understanding the split between self and nature. This split, Jordan argued, is a defense against the vulnerability that humans feel when faced with dependency on the environment. Dependency and vulnerability has resulted in a high prevalence of ambivalent attachment to nature. On a fundamental level, Jordan wrote that there is a split in the human psyche early in life that leads to other-izing nature. Jordan pointed to Melanie Klein's work, which theorizes that we split the good and bad breasts of the mother even though they belong to the same person. In this way, Jordan theorized, the child is able to deal with the simultaneous dependency and vulnerability experienced in infancy. Similarly, Jordan argued, we split the environment into safe and unsafe, human and natural, self-world and other-world. By separating ourselves from nature, we feel that we become less vulnerable to it. This splitting manifests in an individual refusing a relationship

with nature by refusing to engage with what is seen as the “overwhelming indifference” of nature (p. 29). Further, Jordan wrote that one may overcompensate: seeking a *pure* relationship with nature by disowning humanity and going into the wilderness may indeed be a form of narcissism. This individual’s process of forming a healthy, reciprocal relationship with nature is distorted by rage at humanity. So, Jordan claimed, a journey into the wilderness with the objective of forming a deeper relationship with nature wholly apart from humanity may be seen as pathological, disowning humanity from whence they came. According to Jordan, another way of dealing with this vulnerability is Klein’s defense of omnipotence through which the individual attempts to control that which threatens. This drives humans to seek power over nature, furthering the split between self and nature.

Duerr (1987) presented an anthropological study of the boundary between wilderness and civilization. His central argument was that humans experience wilderness as a place beyond the rational order of human civilization. It is *beyond the fence* of our everyday existence; thus, there is a centrality of the unknown, of mystery. Further, it is only by experiencing the wilderness that humans may fully understand their existence within the realm of civilization.

Duerr (1987) conceptualized wilderness experiences as being ‘between the times’ where individuals take on another’s reality. For example, he traced primitive rituals that provided arenas for reversals of gender; in these instances, one took on the qualities of that which was inherently other in order to gain a greater understanding of the self. Duerr described phenomena of the witch’s flight and the werewolf as examples. The witch did not physically fly and the human did not physically turn into a wolf, but in both cases the individual has a full and tangible experience of that flight into the wilderness or the wolf.

Contemporary society, Duerr wrote, no longer experiences this dissolution of boundaries.

The way to form a fuller understanding of oneself and the civilization in which one is rooted is to experience a temporary dissolution boundary between wilderness and civilization. As for Jordan (2009), the wilderness is not a place to find a home, but a way of forming a more balanced awareness of oneself and universe.

Of note is that Duerr (1987) did not focus on what is *natural* or pure in the wilderness versus civilization. This tacitly acknowledges that humans are social beings and will *naturally* live in society. Rather, it is paramount that humans within the bounds of civilization not lose track of what it means to be outside that fence. As with Shepard (1992), Duerr wrote that we experience wilderness as a foil to human civilization; it complements and augments our sense of self within civilization.

Roszak (1992) took a radically different stance in his work, *The Voice of the Earth*. Rather than framing nature within the psychology of the *other*, Roszak wrote that “the core of the mind is the ecological unconscious” (p. 320). This ecological unconscious holds the inherited memory of the living organismic system of the earth, rather than just the human race as Jung posited. Thus, a primary element of the individuation process is uncovering this ecological unconscious and to come fully into the complex interweavings of the ecological system. So, to Roszak, experiences of the wilderness are instances of coming into closer contact with our fundamental core. It is not an experience of crossing over to the *other*, but of coming into a broadened self. He extended the task of self-knowledge, writing, “there is more to know about the self, or rather *more self* to know, than our personal history reveals. . . . The person is anchored within a greater, universal identity.” (p. 319).

As with Jordan (2009), Rozsak (1992) framed the separation from the environment in terms of object relations theory, which posits that the mind has a fundamental need for the perfect environment. Surely, Rozsak wrote, this extends beyond the mother and includes the need for a harmonious and secure relationship with the open system of the cosmos. So, wilderness is experienced as a broadening sense of self and a strengthened sense of relationship with the interconnected ecological system.

Rozsak (1992) also wrote that one task of ecopsychology is to question the role of masculinity in creating the power structures that have led humans to dominate nature as a separate entity. The experience of wilderness is determined by the same power structures that also determine qualities of civilization; a culture of clear ego-boundaries and dominance rooted in the patriarchy sets the wilderness apart and makes it an experience of the dangerous *other*. This echoes of Olson's (Olson & Backes, 2001) description of the wilderness experience, as well as the current lack of boundary-dissolution described by Duerr (1987). It also points to the question of how wilderness might be experienced in a context that transcends patriarchal constructs.

McDonald, Wearing, and Ponting (2009) studied peak experiences of individuals visiting wilderness areas. A term pioneered by Maslow (1968), a peak experience is a transformative and extraordinarily happy or ecstatic moment. Peak experiences can alleviate pathological symptoms, help an individual move towards positive change, and increase creativity and spontaneity. The peak experience is particularly memorable and stays with the individual long after the experience occurred. Peak experiences include but are not limited to: "esthetic experience, creative experience, love experience, mystic experience, [and] insight

experience” (Maslow, 1968, p. 102). During peak experiences, Maslow wrote, individuals are “*most* their identities, closest to their real selves.” (p. 103).

McDonald, Wearing, and Ponting (2009) found seven themes in individuals’ peak experiences in the wilderness: an attention to aesthetic qualities of the setting, separation from the issues of the human world, a feeling of the experience being significant or meaningful, the peak experience described was not an isolated experience, a feeling of oneness or connection, a sense of having overcome constraints, and an increased understanding in proximity to the experience. Further, the authors found that elements of the wilderness setting that were most likely to trigger a peak experience were “the aesthetic qualities of the wilderness setting and escaping the pressures, people, distractions, and concerns of the human-made world” (p. 383). Further, they noted that peak experiences in the wilderness might be linked with spiritual qualities through recognizing a sense of the sacred in the environment as well as feeling connected to the “powerful unseen forces of wild nature” (p. 383). This finding adds a spiritual element to the feeling of interconnection about which Cookson (2011) and Rozsak (1992) wrote, and supports the aesthetic qualities of the wilderness experience that Grange (1977) discussed.

### **Ecophilosophy**

Zimmerman (1992) discussed multiple perspectives on the issue of wilderness as the *other*. Wilderness, he wrote, reminds human civilization of interconnections: of its dependency not only on itself, but on the dynamics of the entire ecosystem. Wilderness serves as a reminder that nature may be domesticated, but never fully controlled. In developing this position, he outlined relevant arguments made by Martin Heidegger and Susan Griffin.



Zimmerman (1992) began with an account of Heidegger's arguments on the separation between humans and nature. Heidegger asserted that a sense of being is tied to language; there can be no sense of being without language to describe that being. Hence, humans are the only entities for whom it is possible to have a sense of being. This creates an "abyss" (p. 251) between humans and animals. For Heidegger, this ability to reveal oneself in a state of being makes humans intrinsically different from other animals; hence, we are not Nietzsche's "clever animal striving for nothing more than security and control" (p. 251). In this conception, humans experience wilderness as something inherently separate. This separation lies in the distinction between *entities* and *being*. Entities lack that linguistic ability to allow them to come into a state of being, an ability with which humans are endowed. Collectively, Zimmerman wrote, humans forgot this separation and instead conceptualized humans as animals with greater intelligence. By identifying with the rest of nature, humans sought to protect themselves from and control wilderness; they began to domesticate nature. This argument discussed two dimensions of the experience of nature: humans identifying with nature, and humans as separate from nature. In the former, wilderness is otherized only by degrees of likeness and difference. In the latter, wilderness is inherently *other*, separated from humans by the linguistic chasm of being.

Zimmerman (1992) expanded on this theory of inherent separateness in writing that humans control nature through allowing nature's presence to come into a state of being. In this Cartesian argument, an object moves into a subjective space only when it is beheld by a human, and a human is the only entity that can understand that object as being in a state of being due to language faculty. The subjective state of being of this object fundamentally

binds the object to the human. Its state of being is dependent on human subjectivity. Thus, the ontology of nature is controlled by humans.

Zimmerman (1992) also engaged in a discussion of Susan Griffin's work, *The Roaring Inside Her*, in which feminist perspectives on wilderness are taken up. From her perspective, wilderness is the other of the patriarchy on which western civilization is so dependent. It is this patriarchy that has created the series of dualisms that made possible the split between humans and wilderness or nature. From this point of view, experiences of the wilderness from the perspective of the patriarchal ego are experiences of chaos and disorder. The civilized human seeks to assert control and linear order in the face of this chaos. Here again are the *use* and *separateness* issues in relation to masculinity or patriarchy (Roszak, 1992). Conversely, witch culture is rooted in the feminine capacity to tap into nonlinear order and chaos of wilderness (Zimmerman, 1992); this point is echoed in Duerr's (1987) analysis.

Zimmerman (1992) wrote about recollectivization: when an individual is unable to cope with the anxiety and tension experienced in human civilization, he or she seeks an escape by identifying with nature. This is, in effect, an over-compensation in disowning humanity and leads to a dissociative ego-consciousness as the individual's ego dissolves into identification with nature (see Jordan, 2009). Zimmerman went on to describe a middle ground for experiencing wilderness, integrating elements of the human side as well as the wilderness. It is a more "expansive consciousness" (p. 262) in which the individual is able to feel harmony with the natural and human worlds while mitigating the anxieties and tensions of civilization and at the same time maintaining clearly defined ego boundaries. The wilderness has a deeper and more complex system of rhythms and movements with which

we, at some level, resonate. As civilized beings, removed from the complex system of the wilderness, however, these dynamics are difficult to perceive and to understand.

This expansive consciousness issue was also taken up by Fox (1995) in his book on transpersonal directions for ecology. In it, he discussed three modes of identification with nature through which one is able to expand one's sense of self. Three types of identification that we experience are personal, ontological, and cosmological. In personal identification, we identify with objects or settings through personal experience or contact with those entities. By having direct personal experience, those entities become a part of our identity. There may be an initial period of dis-identification, but experience binds that entity to the individual's identity. Ontological identification refers to a deeply rooted realization of connection through the sheer fact that an entity exists. The ontology of the entity gives the observer a deep sense of commonality with that entity, thus becoming strongly connected to the individual's identity. A third mode of identification, cosmological, refers to the realization that all entities are a part of a "single unfolding reality" (p. 252). From this point of view, an individual gains a deeply rooted awareness of their place as an entity within a vastly complex and interconnected system.

In an essay on perception of the environment, Kohak (1992) wrote that beauty "appears to us as a subject's way of perceiving rather than as a perception of the beautiful" (p. 173). Even before the subject's experience of perceiving can be processed neurologically, it is charged with value and meaning from the very moment of perception; it is prereflective. So, if our value assessments and sense of meaningfulness occur at the prereflective moment of perception, this plays into our view of nature. The use-oriented view of nature, Kohak wrote, is grounded in value and meaning assessments—conceptualizations of how nature

may be used—rather than perception of beauty. This is evidence of the way in which humans perceive nature. When perception of nature is grounded in use-based value rather than intrinsic value or meaning, humans may lose the ability to perceive beauty.

Kohak (1992) presented three approaches for learning to “see the good”—to perceive the intrinsic worth of nature. The first is a speculative strategy: Drawing on the work of Husserl, Kohak described a strategy of enclosing the perceived other into the self. By “reach[ing] out to the otherness of the other, [we] inevitably enclose the other within the reach of human subjectivity and so mask the dimension of its otherness” (p. 181). This strategy is problematic in that it tends to deny the “hardness of reality” (p. 181) and subsumes the full nature of the other into one’s own sense of self, distorted by the phenomenal experience of perception as well as the subject’s preexisting ideas, beliefs, and experiences. While it is possible to speculate on the experience of the other, this type of identification may provide more insight into the subject than the object. In the context of one’s relationship with the wilderness, this approach is an attempt to inhabit the wilderness psychologically—to expand the bounds of what is conceived of as the self to include the wilderness object. The self does not dissipate, but rather grows. In this way, the fact of the wilderness as uninhabited, non-human other is destroyed.

A second approach that Kohak (1992) described was a set of contemplative strategies. The focus of this approach was on communicating and evoking the experience of perception, rather than describing the object in an accurate way. This approach acknowledges the impossibility of describing the ineffable feeling of “standing in mute awe before the wonder of being” (p. 183). However, Kohak wrote, by communicating only what was evoked by the experience without providing categories for communicating the experience itself, this

approach results in “poetic impotence” (p. 183). Apparently, a sense of the ineffable should be balanced with a means of describing the experience as it was perceived.

A third approach that Kohak (1992) presented stems from the work of Hans Jonas: the sheer fact of being conveys intrinsic worth because its existence makes value possible. So, Kohak wrote, “being is...intrinsically good, because it is capable of goodness, capable of being the bearer of value” (p. 184). In a sense, potential goodness makes for intrinsic goodness.

Still, this third approach seems to link intrinsic worth to value for use in a strong, even causal manner. If there were no possibility for an object’s value through use, then there would be no intrinsic worth. For this reason, intrinsic worth is still dependent on use and becomes a utilitarian perspective on nature. Seeing worth as dependent on potential for use is not qualitatively different from seeing worth for usefulness. In either case, this ready-at-hand perceptual mode may be descriptive of one’s experience of wilderness: perception is painted by use, or potential for use, rather than intrinsic worth or beauty.

### **Emergent Themes**

From these sources emerge several themes. One is the question of naturalness that we experience in wilderness. For several authors, wilderness is a place in which one comes into contact with that which is truly human before becoming corrupted by civilization (Cookson, 2011; Nash, 2001; Olson & Backes, 2001). However, while Olson and Cookson both argued that wilderness experiences are more ‘natural’ experiences, they differed wildly in the issue of systems and symbiosis. Other authors have asserted that wilderness may be experienced not as something wholly ‘natural’ but as a place on which to project our disowned or unacknowledged desires (Cronon, 1995; Duerr, 1987).

Another emergent theme is the experience of wilderness as *other*. In the scholarship reviewed, this other-ness was met with either the experience of inhabitation or visitation. It is a process of opening into (Grange, 1977; Kohak, 1992; Rozsak, 1992) or crossing over (Duerr, 1987; Zimmerman, 1992). It is receiving something that was lost or encountering something different; a way of being or an encounter. In some cases, this otherness comes about due to power imbalances and dualities rooted in the patriarchy (Rozsak, 1992; Zimmerman, 1992). In others, the otherness results from an inherent and insurmountable difference between humans and wilderness (Kohak, 1992; Zimmerman, 1992). Conversely, other authors have written that wilderness is experienced as having fundamental sameness with the observer (Grange, 1977; Fox, 1995; Jordan, 2009).

A stream linked to this theme is that of interconnectivity. Several authors wrote of the wilderness experience as a deep recognition of the fundamental interconnectedness of entities within a system (Cookson, 2011; Fox, 1995; Grange, 1977; Rozsak, 1992; Shepard, 1992).

A third emergent theme is that of use versus intrinsic value. There have been multiple ways of conceptualizing our view of the wilderness in terms of usefulness and altruism (Fox, 1995; Grange, 1977; Kohak, 1992; Zimmerman, 1992). These tended to be presented as mutually exclusive, though no author has explicitly stated that altruistic and self-serving cannot be held in conjunction.

A final emergent theme is that of order in the wilderness (Duerr, 1987; Frye, 1957; Merchant, 1995; Olson & Backes, 2001; Zimmerman, 1992). Wilderness may be experienced as having a rational order, or a nonlinear order that appears to the civilized human as chaos. Wilderness may indeed have its own system of logic or order that transcends understanding in human civilization.

Clearly, there is no single or universal way in which humans experience wilderness. However, this review has outlined major themes in several disciplines that may provide theoretical framework for understanding an individual's experience of wilderness.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Method**

In this chapter is a description of the research setting and participants, as well as procedures for data collection and data analysis. This study received approval from the Institutional Review Board at Appalachian State University under Study #12-0238 on April 17, 2014.

#### **Research Setting**

I conducted this research through interviews with GIM clients. Interviews occurred in a rural location in western North Carolina at a local university. For participants who were unable to meet in person, the interview took place via online teleconference software. The interviews were based on transcripts from GIM sessions that I facilitated. These sessions occurred in the same rural area in western North Carolina at a community health clinic operated by a local university, where services were provided at free, reduced, and standard rates by university students, faculty, and staff. Services provided at this clinic include a range of mental health and speech and language therapies and are offered to faculty, staff, students, and community members. GIM sessions occurred in a dedicated music therapy room and lasted approximately 1.5–2 hours. I took the role of GIM therapist, interviewer, and researcher because the close therapeutic relationship allowed me to better understand the experiences, imagery, and context of issues discussed in the interviews. Further, the phenomenological method of inquiry acknowledges and embraces the co-creative process inherent in the intersubjective space of interview-based research (Moustakas, 1994).



## **Participants**

Participants were three individuals from the community in which the research occurred. Participants were required to be age 18 or older and did not have current symptoms or diagnoses of psychosis, as GIM is contraindicated for individuals with psychosis (Cohen, 2002). Participants were required to have completed a series of at least four GIM sessions. Participants must have had these GIM sessions with me, the researcher, as GIM therapist. This helped to standardize the GIM session experience, as there is much variation in style between GIM therapists. Additionally, this ensured that the interviewee and I already established rapport before the interview begins. Finally, I was already familiar with the session transcript on which the participant chooses to focus the interview; as such, I had an existing understanding and memory of the experiences, imagery, and context of issues addressed within that session.

This design did set up a dual-relationship; the therapist and client were asked to shift to researcher-interviewee at the time of the interview. This shift was undergone in a sensitive manner, and no problems ensued because of the time-limited and confidential nature of the research, as well as the research context, shifted from therapeutic aims. The interview was based on therapeutic material already witnessed and discussed in a previous session; in one sense, this interview may have help the participant to further process their own imagery in a new way. The researcher removed identifying information from the final analysis and dissemination to ensure confidentiality of the participants. Participants were fully informed of the research protocol and resultant temporary dual relationship and were given the opportunity to either decline or accept the invitation to participate. In the final stage of

analysis, participants had the opportunity to give input on preliminary findings and to add or remove any material from the final product.

**Recruitment.** Participants were recruited from a pool of individuals that have had at least four GIM sessions with me, the researcher, as GIM therapist. Individuals who were currently engaged in GIM sessions, regardless of current therapist, were included in this pool. Each of these individuals was invited to participate through email with a brief description of the study. When an individual responded with interest, I provided a more detailed description including an informed consent form. Three individuals agreed to participate.

### **Procedure**

**Epoché.** What follows is a sketch of my preconceptions regarding wilderness and wilderness in GIM. By articulating these, I am better prepared to enter an unbiased frame of mind when collecting data and conducting data analysis. I recognize that there is a complex web of preconceptions that are impossible to fully articulate here; this list is a start.

In my mind's eye, I see wilderness as a place that is separate from human civilization. While humans might go there and participate in the wilderness system, my preconception is that the wilderness is distinctly set apart from humanity.

I view wilderness with a sense of awe and reverence; I see in it the sublime. I also conceive of wilderness as a free and self-sustaining system that is beautiful; it is an anarchic dance. Along those lines, generativity is important to my definition of wilderness, as opposed to understanding wilderness as a wasteland. I associate this generative quality with the archetypal feminine.

I conceive of the opposite of this as a patriarchal relationship with the wilderness, which in my preconceptions is based on dominance. I see this task-oriented relationship as

harmful and understand many outdoor sports and activities to facilitate the development of this relationship. Because of my own experiences with wilderness and my philosophical leanings, I view a struggle against wilderness as a rejection of and refusal to participate in the interconnected system of the ecosystem, the earth, and the universe.

Due to my Judeo-Christian upbringing and my place situated in Western culture, my preconceptions about wilderness were, in part, shaped by the role of wilderness in Judeo-Christian scriptures, as well as its role in western European fairytale and myth. It follows that in my GIM experiences, wilderness has been the arena in which trials and quests took place. The wilderness has also been an actor and catalyst in transpersonal and unitive experiences for me, so I preconceive of wilderness as a symbol for transpersonal and unitive experiences.

Prior to each interview and prior to each time I worked on data analysis, I intentionally cleared my mind and took a short time to enter into a meditative state of mind, clearing it of any preconceived knowings about the topic. To the greatest extent possible, I sought to let the conversation and the participant's experience guide the interview and the emerging elements in the transcript guide the analysis.

### **Data Collection**

After agreeing to participate in this study, participants scheduled an interview. Prior to the interview, I asked the participant to select one previous GIM session, excluding the first two, in which wilderness imagery seemed to be most prominent. The interview focused on this single session in order to allow the greatest depth of description within an interview of manageable length. The researcher recognized the bias inherent in focusing on a session in which wilderness imagery appeared most prominent to the participant. It is quite possible that the role of this wilderness imagery was qualitatively different than in other sessions in which

wilderness imagery is less prominent. One way to reduce this bias may have been to invite the participant to select two sessions: one in which wilderness imagery is most prominent, and one in which it is least prominent. However, it is my suspicion that even within a single session, there would be wilderness imagery that was more and less prominent, creating a small but even sample through the course of a single session. Additionally, this was beyond the scope of the present study.

The first two sessions were excluded from selection in order to account for a GIM client's process of learning the possibilities of imaging (Bonny & Tansill, 1977/2002). In my experience as GIM therapist, trainee, and client, it typically takes a new client one to two sessions to become fully accustomed to the GIM session format and process of imaging. After two sessions, clients are typically able to better maintain and explore imagery sequences with the music. Additionally, transcripts must not be from the final session of a series. This is because the final session in a series is often focused on issues of closure and can be less representative of the larger body of imagery and issues with which the client interacted through the course of that series. Each individual that agreed to participate in this study had had a sufficient number of GIM sessions that there were at least three sessions to choose from after all exclusions.

I asked the participant to review the transcript from the selected session prior to the interview, and inform me of the selection so that I also could review it. This preparation aided both parties' memory of session details, thus allowing more time for discussion of topics beyond session content. Having been the therapist for the GIM sessions in question, I maintain copies of each session transcript. When necessary, I provided the participant with

an electronic copy of the chosen transcript prior to the interview and provided hard copies of the transcript at the interview to aid review and discussion of content.

Interviews lasted approximately 1.5–2 hours. Interviews took place in a mutually convenient location in a private room, or via online teleconference software. At the beginning of this interview, I read aloud the informed consent form (see Appendix A). If the participant agreed to continue, I invited the participant to sign the informed consent form. The participant was given a hard copy of this form to sign. For online interviews, I sent an electronic version of the consent form approximately one week prior to the interview, provided opportunities for the participant to ask questions, and received the signed consent form prior to the interview.

The interview followed a semi-structured format. It began with a brief definition of wilderness imagery as follows: wilderness is that which is primarily nonhuman. Wilderness can be a setting; for instance, a forest, field, beach; a place primarily separate from human culture and society. Wilderness can be an object; for instance, a tree or a turtle. There will be gray areas; for instance, a farm field is sown and cultivated by humans, but exists as a community of nonhuman organisms. In instances such as these, it will be up to the participant to deem these primarily wilderness or nonwilderness.

Following this definition, I directed the focus to the session transcript. The participant and I progressed through the transcript chronologically, identifying each instance of wilderness imagery. For each instance, as it arose, the following questions guided the interview:

- Describe the imagery
- What happened/what did the wilderness image(s) do?

- Did you have an attitude or feeling toward the wilderness image(s)? If so, what?
- Were you aware that the image had attitude or feeling toward you? If so, what?
- Describe any feelings associated with the wilderness image(s).
- Did you interact with the wilderness image(s)? If so, how?

These questions formed a flexible structure for the interview; other questions and topics were explored as they arose within the context of the interview. The interview terminated when all wilderness imagery occurring in the session transcript had been adequately discussed.

Each interview was audio-recorded into digital files. After the interview, the researcher transcribed this interview into digital text files for data analysis. Audio-recordings of all interviews are kept in password-protected computer folders. Any identifying information is kept strictly confidential. All identifying information was removed from the transcripts. The principal researcher was the only individual with access to identifying information. The principal researcher protected the anonymity of all participants by refraining to use names or any identifying information in the final report.

### **Data Analysis**

Using the phenomenological method and adaptation of epoché described above, the following procedure was utilized for data analysis:

Using a transcription of each interview, I

1. Determined each statement's relevance to wilderness
2. Recorded all statements determined to be relevant to wilderness
3. Listed invariant meaning units after removing repeating and overlapping statements.
4. Clustered invariant meaning units into emergent themes

5. Synthesized invariant meaning units and themes into a textural description of the experience of wilderness imagery, recording specific examples
6. Engaged in imaginative variation in order to create a structural description of wilderness imagery
7. Repeated steps 1–6 for each interview transcript
8. Combined textural and structural descriptions from all interview transcripts to create a complete and integrated textural-structural description for the group of participants.

Upon completion of this preliminary data analysis, results from each participant were returned via email. Participants were encouraged to review the preliminary findings, provide feedback, and add or remove any statements, descriptions, or themes that they deemed necessary. Each of the participants responded to this call for feedback, confirmed the preliminary analysis, and did not request any changes, additions, or omissions.

## Chapter 4

### Results

Included in this chapter are individual and synthetic levels of textural and structural descriptions of participants' experiences of wilderness imagery. First, essences of each participant's experience are given. These include distillations of each interview. Next are themes that emerged from the synthetic analysis of all three interviews. Each theme is presented with a discussion of meanings, or possible meanings, embedded in the textural descriptions. Following these emergent themes is the distilled synthetic essence of how participants experienced wilderness imagery.

Brief narratives of each participant's session are included in Appendix B. The reader may find these overviews helpful to set the context for the analysis included in this chapter.

#### Individual Essences

These essences are based on themes that emerged from the analysis of each individual interview. They are distillations of each participant's experience of wilderness imagery.

**Participant 1.** In the experience of Participant 1 there were two distinct constellations of affect valences that corresponded with two distinct sets of wilderness images: positive and inviting associated with greenery and warmth, and frustrating and bleak associated with cold and icy imagery. So, her experience of wilderness imagery was characterized by two distinct phases each mainly consisting of either positive or negative affective valences. Her experience also was characterized by contrasts between spontaneity and imminence, contrasts between simplicity and complexity, sensing shifts in agency



between herself and the imagery, a state of naturalness, expansiveness, nothingness, perspective shifts, curiosity, and strong sensory experiences.

**Participant 2.** Unlike Participant 1, Participant 2 experienced wilderness primarily as a place of supportive, positive, and collaborative challenge. It was an arena in which he was presented with challenges of increasing difficulty and could choose whether or not to meet those challenges. As the degree of difficulty increased, so did the reward. Each time, the reward was “energizing.” Wilderness was a place in which he could do what he needed. His experience also was characterized by having full agency in choosing whether to engage in tasks; feeling openness in his surroundings and being alone from people; a continuity of feeling calm, peace, and relaxation between shifting scenes; and noting his imagery as analogs for other sessions and his waking life at the time of the session.

**Participant 3.** This participant experienced wilderness as mystical energy that was distinctly separate from her. Any object, whether human or not, could have this mystical energy. This mystical energy was kept separate from her; if she identified with it, the mystical energy dissipated. She experienced wilderness images as wise and holding answers or objects that she needed. Wilderness was a relatively stable setting for her own transformation. She changed, which made her experience of those same images change. She experienced wilderness as an open place that balanced freedom of possibilities with the safety of containment. A sense of openness and a feeling of being on a journey also characterized her experience, and she acknowledged her imagery as an analog for her waking life at the time of the session.

## **Emergent Themes**

The synthetic analysis of all three interviews revealed 12 themes, which were found in all three interviews, with one exception noted below. Structural descriptions are given in a discussion of each theme, laying out meanings embedded in participants' experiences.

### **1. The experiences involved extraordinary interactions with wilderness images**

Each participant had experiences that were extraordinary in the sense that there were interactions that do not typically occur in ordinary consensual reality. Participant 1 was taken up a massive tree by a robin pulling at her sweater, and then slid down the tree after it became smooth like a fire-pole. Participant 2 reached up into space and grabbed a star. Participant 3 became one with mist after following a dragon. These are just three of many examples of such extraordinary interactions.

**Discussion.** The emergence of this theme suggests more flexibility in interacting with and experiencing wilderness settings and objects in GIM than in consensual reality. This means that participants experienced wilderness in a shifted reality that transcended norms and constraints of consensual reality. It is likely that this theme is a function of the GIM process. Indeed, this theme is no surprise in a GIM context; clients regularly interact with images in ways that would be wholly unlikely or impossible in ordinary reality. This is likely due, among other factors, to the client's altered state of consciousness and the expanded possibilities of imagined experiences.

### **2. Events felt both unexpected and predetermined.**

Each participant described events within the wilderness imagery as simultaneously unexpected and as having a feeling of being predetermined. Events occurred spontaneously

and were surprising to the participants, but when they happened, each described a sense of that event having been predetermined, as if it were meant to have happened.

Participant 3 experienced this element in the final scene of her session, noting that this was both the place and the experience to which she had been heading through the entire imagery sequence. At the end of a succession of unexpected scenes, Participant 2 had a sense that the final two scenes were where he had been meant to end. Participant 1 described several instances of feeling like something was coming, but she did not know what. These instances included an element of foreboding. There was a sense of expectation without knowing the outcome.

**Discussion.** These events occurred without warning and without the participants' perception of their own agency. This exemplifies the complementarity of their experiences: sensing that an event was both unexpected to the participant and predetermined. This juxtaposition is clear for Participants 2 and 3. For Participant 1, the juxtaposition was in the lead-up itself when she had a sense of a process being set in motion without her having control over it or having any sense of what it would be. The difference between her experience and those of Participants 2 and 3 seems to be the timing at which she understood the event to be in motions. She felt the complementarity as the process took shape, while Participants 2 and 3 sensed an event to have been predetermined only after it had taken shape.

It is noteworthy that this sense of determinism occurred in an unexpected way—it struck at least two of the participants in a moment of epiphany. Once they were embedded in the predetermined experience that felt right, they noted that it was what was supposed to

happen. The elements of external locus of control, surprise, and determinism seem to imply a larger organizing structure than their conscious minds in their experience of the wilderness.

### **3. The degree of agency felt in choice-events was important to their experiences**

All three participants experienced the degree of agency in choice-events as being noteworthy. Two participants felt that they had this agency, while one did not. Participant 2 sensed a great deal of agency in making choices, particularly regarding his participation in challenges provided by the wilderness images. Upon being presented with a challenge, he chose whether to engage based on how accessible it seemed. He had no control over what challenges were presented or what was required in order to succeed at the challenge, but he did feel control over his decision.

For Participant 3, wilderness images provided options for choice. Wilderness images set up possibilities, and it was up to her to choose and to initiate the action. She felt “no pressure” to make the choice. At times, this choice involved a willingness or commitment to work. For example, she said, “These fish were there to guide me, but it was my choice. It’s like they know that they could offer me something, but I have to be ready to do the work. . . . If I need them, they’ll be there, but I have to be the one that initiates.”

Conversely, Participant 1 experienced events as happening “not of [her] will.” She participated and engaged, but did not sense that she had choice or control over certain events. In one instance, the choice that was made for her was contrary to her desires: She felt forced to jump into the pool by encroaching pedestals. Though she said she might have wanted to jump in eventually, she wanted to do it in her own time. The other instances were “fun” or otherwise positive, so she felt no conflict between her desires and the choices being made for her.

**Discussion.** This theme seems to be related to the unexpected/predetermined complementarity discussed above. Participant 1 did not feel that she controlled events, but accepted and engaged with whatever the imagery presented. Even when she was forced into an action and felt that the decision had been made for her, she engaged because there was no other option. It is noteworthy that this was the only instance of her feeling frustrated or irritated in her session, and it occurred when she was forced into this action against her will.

The ways in which these three participants experienced agency in choice-events outlines three points in a spectrum of obligation. On one end of that spectrum, Participant 1 was wholly obligated to participate in the choice-events because she felt no agency. Participant 3 felt hints of obligation. This occurred most conspicuously in her first interactions with forest animals when she felt responsibility to care for them: “I felt that I needed to be responsible, but I didn’t want to.” But, this was balanced by feeling “no pressure” to make certain decisions at other times. Each time wilderness images offered her a choice, she noted, “I have to be ready to do the work.” On the far end of the spectrum, Participant 2 felt no obligation to choose to meet a challenge offered to him. He was motivated to choose to engage in events that were wilderness-related; and was completely unmotivated to engage in others, such as interactions with a woman, and “inaccessible” or more difficult challenges. It seems that there was an optimal level of challenge that he was prepared to accept, and he felt comfortable declining those that were beyond that limit. This suggests that he felt little responsibility to the offerings of wilderness. His decisions were based on what was right for him. As with Participant 3, if he chose to engage, it was up to him to put in the necessary work.

#### 4. Wilderness imagery provided both support and challenges

Each participant experienced support and challenges from wilderness images. These qualities were overlaid at times and were successive at others. Participant 1 described feeling metaphorically and literally supported by helpful and gentle images throughout the first two-thirds of her session. In the latter portion, she experienced a complement to the support: while not describing it explicitly as a challenge, she was challenged by being forced into a small pool and had to find a way out.

Participant 2 experienced challenges of varied degrees throughout the course of the session and described them as positive. The wilderness provided opportunities for him to do what he needed and to complete challenges that led to rewards in a supportive environment. These challenges were well within his abilities.

Participant 3 experienced a great deal of support while experiencing the wilderness images. This support had strong elements of safety and security. She noted that multiple wilderness objects were supporting her. For example she noted, “[I’m] letting the water support me.” Indeed, she experienced support as the primary role of a few wilderness objects; for instance, a woman whom she encountered in the woods. These supportive images were embedded within a larger narrative of her quest to find what the wilderness had for her.

**Discussion.** It is noteworthy that neither Participant 1 nor Participant 3 described having a sense of agency in overcoming their challenges. In the case of Participant 1, the wilderness was collaborative: When she tried, the image gave way. Participant 3 did not experience the challenge as being actively presented by the wilderness; rather, something was there and her task was to find it. For her, the wilderness was a disinterested entity.

In the case of Participants 2 and 3, the wilderness provided a challenge that would lead to something that the participant needed and that required work to get it. In completing the task, the wilderness images provided support to the participants. Participant 1 felt support and challenge successively, while Participants 2 and 3 experienced support and challenge embedded within the same images simultaneously. In both cases, there was a provision of emotional resources that may have been linked with overcoming the challenge.

The second participant's language implicitly attributed agency to the image in that the image actively gave him a challenge. It was his responsibility to either meet that challenge or not. The third participant met the wilderness's challenge in a more subtle way. It had something for her, and it was her task to decipher what it was. In this way, all three participants experienced a collaborative process with the wilderness.

### **5. Participants felt openness and expansiveness**

The feeling of openness and expansiveness manifested either in open and expansive settings or in the participant's sense of feeling more open and expansive within themselves. A prevalent theme in the imagery of Participants 1 and 2 was that of vast open expanses that go on and on. For instance, Participant 1 described the top of the grassy hill, the vista from the top of the tree, and the scene of snow and ice as "open" or "openness." When she ascended the tree, she noted, "[The tree] feels like it went up and up forever and ever" and, "[I was] curious if we'd ever stop." Of the pool she said, "I couldn't see the bottom of it. . . . I knew it went really far, was really deep." Participant 1 noted that throughout the session she repeatedly ascended to get a "bird's eye view." Participant 2 described expansiveness in similar terms: "It's very open;" "There's nothing to get in my way;" "There are no doors, no barriers—it's just open."

Participant 3 experienced openness both as a quality of the space and a quality in herself. The lake that she came to three times felt open, and each time she returned, the sense of openness became more distinct. These open spaces came with a sense of “endless possibilities,” and they gained qualities like “nurturing” and “peacefulness.” In the final scene, she described a feeling of the space opening up followed by her own self opening up. This was the moment at which she recalled finding “equilibrium” between “security and freedom.”

**Discussion.** Participants experienced expansiveness both in terms of the setting and interior processes. Participant 2’s language points to a possible embedded meaning: In openness, there were no barriers. It is possible that their experiences of expansiveness and openness were felt experiences of dissolution of barriers. This fits with Participant 3’s experience of interior openness. Her description suggests a heightened receptivity to taking in the space and being fully herself: “I could be completely myself in that space.” This language suggests that she felt an increased authenticity in herself, and the barriers between her behaviors or feelings and her authentic self became more permeable in this moment. The open quality of the images may have precipitated that experience. Perhaps wilderness carried this quality of fewer boundaries, both internally and externally.

## **6. There was continuity through shifting images**

Each participant’s experiences were characterized by continuity of affect, associations, feelings, or images through shifting scenes. In terms of affective valence, Participant 1’s session was divided into two sections of approximately the first 2/3 and the final 1/3. Each time the scene shifted in this first portion, the new scene felt similar to the previous and carried descriptors including “positive,” “gentle,” “friendly,” “happy,” and



“calm.” Similarly, she described two of the three major scenes in the latter portion as feeling the same: “harsh,” bleak,” and full of ice and snow. Further, Participant 1 felt a sense of expansiveness through the entirety of her session. There was one exception to this expansiveness: Participant 1 was felt forced into a pool with narrow rock walls where she felt constricted until the walls expanded and allowed her to escape. Participant 2 had a similar experience of continuity of feeling between scenes even when the images themselves changed. For instance, he noted how he described the beach, forest, and top of the tree using the same words: “calming;” “comfortable;” “peaceful;” “relaxed.” He recognized this, saying, “They feel like the exact same thing with different images.”

Participant 3’s experience was an inversion of the other two participants’ in that she experienced continuity of images that were experienced quite differently each time. She entered a lake scene three times. The place was the same every time, but her experience of the same place changed in the three times she entered it. The first felt pressured, and the second felt like she had time and could breathe and had her space, was nurtured, and soaked up energy. In the third, she had a peak experience<sup>4</sup> and had optimal balance between freedom and security.

**Discussion.** For the first two participants, there was a continuity of feeling that transcended the particulars of each location. They seemed instead to be different images that were containers for the same set of feelings, awarenesses, and associations. Indeed, it may have been that while they kept moving, each participant was, in a sense, in the same place with a different instantiation. Participant 2’s words suggest this possibility: “I just wanted to

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<sup>4</sup> See definition on p. 56 (Maslow, 1968).

be in that space for the whole session. . . . It's like I was taking a road to get to the exact same space. Same emotions, same motivation.”

Participant 3's experience may support this. Each time she found herself in the same scene, she experienced it in a wildly different way. Her imagery was literally continuous and may have functioned as a stable background that allowed her interior shifts to become more discernable. All three of the participants found themselves in the same place instantiated differently, possibly because in some way they were not yet finished with that place. That these constellations of qualities continued through changing imagery suggests a deeper organizing structure than the imagery itself. It is possible that there were qualities manifested in the wilderness imagery that the participants needed to stay with. The continuity through scene shifts allowed them to continue moving and changing, while staying with the given constellation of qualities.

In this way their imagery may have functioned as a place that could hold each of them in different phases of their non-linear journeys. The wilderness was a container for their mythic paradox: They were simultaneously on a journey, as well as exactly where they needed to be, which may be mythically understood as a natural pure state. They were simultaneously able to change while holding some sense of consistency. The wilderness held both sides of this paradox.

### **7. They became wilderness images**

Each of the participants had an experience of becoming an image that they considered to be wilderness, either through transforming into a new image or merging with one that was already present. Participant 1 described her experience of turning into a blackbird. After noticing a black substance on her, she suddenly changed. It happened spontaneously, and she

neither thought about it nor questioned it. While a blackbird, she was aware of her new capability of flying and flew up to look around.

Participant 2 described an experience of merging with a light at the top of the pyramid. He encountered the light, got closer to it, and then it entered him: “It was all around me . . . I was just in the light. . . . It was going in, giving me energy.” It was an “amazing” experience that literally energized him. Participant 3 had an experience similar to Participant 2’s in that she merged with fog or mist that she had been following. She described the merging process: “The mist was surrounding me, kind of became part of me.” Of the experience she said, “It’s like when I’m really touched by music. It’s like in the blood flow. You can’t really explain it. It kind of becomes part of me. . . . I feel it traveling through, especially my fingers.” Like Participant 2, Participant 3 described her experience as being very high and had difficulty putting it into words.

**Discussion.** Each of these merging processes was preceded by some contact with at least an element of the image. Participants 2 and 3 each saw the image with which they merged first, then was surrounded by it and merged with it. Participant 1 was covered in black, and then became a blackbird. This suggests that such merging processes occur with reference to antecedent images.

While Participant 1 became a concrete image of a blackbird, the images with which Participants 2 and 3 merged were relatively diffuse. These represent two distinctly different types of images with which to merge. The former was of a concrete and known object, clearly referent to experiences in waking life. While the latter included images with clear referents in waking life, the merging experience was more difficult to describe in terms that

refer to waking life experiences. Both are transpersonal experiences, but the experiences of the merging process of the transpersonal experiences were qualitatively different.

From these two types of transpersonal experiences emerged differences in the experiencer's consciousness. The formers' processes of merging with diffuse images were quite strongly felt physically, took up their whole consciousness: "I don't think I was aware of anything except this amazing thing happening to me in that" (Participant 2). Conversely, Participant 1's experience of becoming a blackbird was a quite concrete and straightforward one in which she was very aware of acting as a blackbird would act. Further, Participants 2 and 3 had difficulty describing their experiences, while Participant 1 was able to describe hers in quite concrete terms.

These two types of experiences also represent differences in the process of transpersonal experiences. Participant 1 experienced a sudden shift in imagery, whereas Participants 2 and 3 gradually merged with an image as they came into progressively more fully into contact with that image. These transpersonal experiences of merging suggest that boundaries that normally separate the subject from object broke down. Perhaps these experiences pointed toward some sameness between subject and object, or at least taking on qualities that those objects contained.

Related to the issues raised above is the spiritual or mystical quality of the experience. There was a high degree of ineffability and awe in the experiences of Participants 2 and 3, while this did not seem to be present for Participant 1.

These three participants' experiences of becoming wilderness images illustrate two very different processes of transpersonal experiences: one quite physical, diffuse, difficult to describe, and possibly spiritual or mystical; and the other, more cognitive, sudden, and

concrete. Despite the categorical similarity in that all three were transpersonal experiences, the wilderness images provided experiences of qualitatively different types.

### **8. There was a sense of separateness**

Participant 1 described the wilderness settings she found herself in as vast and felt that there was “nothing else around.” These wilderness settings were characterized by the presence of nothing: “I was aware of the emptiness around me.” Participant 2 defined much of his experience of wilderness as aloneness: “There’s literally nothing around you. . . . You’re completely alone.” He avoided contact with a woman twice, noting that he wanted to be left alone. When his family joined him in the final scene, he noted, “We were alone together.”

Participant 3 experienced wilderness as being distinctly separate from her. There were times at which she wanted to feel connected to wilderness images, but was unable to. She felt a different kind of energy from these wilderness presences, like they were figures from a “fairy tale or storybook”—in some way, they did not belong to her world. When she was able to enter into that figure’s story or world, it no longer had that energy that felt like wilderness. Any time Participant 3 entered into the feeling of a wilderness object, it ceased to feel like wilderness.

**Discussion.** Each of the three participants experienced some sense of separateness as central to their wilderness experience, whether it was a feeling of being in a vast expanse of nothingness, separate from people, or separate from the wilderness images themselves. For Participants 1 and 2 there was a sense of being separate while embedded in the wilderness. For Participant 3 a sense of being irrevocably separate from wilderness was central to her

experience of it. Despite the variance, each participant experienced wilderness as a place to be apart.

The issue of union in this context of separateness may complicate this meaning. As discussed above, all three participants had an experience of becoming a wilderness image. Additionally, the appearance of Participant 2's family allowed him to feel at once apart and feel the support and love that came with a union with his family. These elements suggest a complementarity between separateness and unity in the context of wilderness imagery. Wilderness held the paradox of being at once alone and feeling a sense of union with something other.

### **9. Wilderness was accompanied by energy sensations**

This theme emerged in the experiences of Participants 2 and 3, but not in that of Participant 1. Participant 3's experience of wilderness was characterized primarily by a distinctive feeling of energy. She experienced different valences of this energy from quiet and cool to "very powerful," "vibrant," and having a "sudden burst of energy." The images associated with this energy, which she defined as being wilderness images, included both nonhuman and human images: people, animals, natural settings, and even a city alleyway. The commonality that bound these instances was a "mystical" feeling. In describing this mystical quality, she said, "The best way to describe it is that it feels more like a difference of energy. When it is a mystical energy, it . . . feels more spiritual, " and "It's almost sacred energy to me." Each time she identified a wilderness image, it had some form of this mystical energy to it. In clarifying this sense further, she described one wilderness image by saying, "It didn't feel like this person belonged to this world." Further, that mystical quality added an element of animism:

The wind seemed like a person [sic] interaction. The wind had a voice. We have this word in [my native language] that you can make objects more human-like. The wind had a sense of that. It wasn't just a nice breeze—there was something else.

Participant 3 took in this mystical energy on several occasions. For example, she lay down and was “soaking up that energy.” Participant 2's experiences of energy were quite similar to these of Participant 3. On three separate occasions Participant 2 took in energy from his surroundings. For example, he reached up into the sky and grabbed a star, saying that it felt “like pure energy” and was “energizing.” In another instance the energy came directly from him: “When I was climbing, I was making [the energy]. I was moving, so there was energy inside me that I was moving through, moving with, as a result of me moving.”

**Discussion.** Participant 3's experience of wilderness was predicated on sensing this mystical energy that was from another world, felt more spiritual, and felt alive. For her, wilderness was essentially experienced as these qualities, regardless of what the image was itself. This suggests an essence that transcends an image's surface characteristics that defines an object as wilderness.

For Participant 2 energy was framed in terms of rewards for meeting the challenges with which he was presented. When a challenge was successfully completed, he felt an influx of energy from the wilderness images with which he interacted, which he described as akin to getting a star at the end of a video game level. This suggests that these experiences of energy may have been related to a successful interaction with a wilderness image. He described these challenges as feeling like a collaborative relationship, suggesting that the energy experiences may have been the fruit born from such collaboration.

## 10. Wilderness contained that which they needed

For each participant, the wilderness provided opportunities for receiving or doing what was needed, even if the participant did not know what was needed at the time. Participant 2 noted that wilderness provided him with access to challenges and the associated rewards that he needed at the time. Of it he said, “Physically and emotionally, it feels like you can do what you need to do in wilderness,” and “Wilderness gives you those chances.” There was some element of the wilderness “knowing” what it was that he needed: wilderness images provided him the “opportunity to do what is right for you in that moment.” As with Participant 2, Participant 3 repeatedly had the sense that the wilderness held answers or objects for her: “it seemed like they had a message or things that I needed.” She reflected, “The energy seemed to know what I needed at the moment . . . so it seemed like the wilderness was always six steps ahead of me.” Along this line, she described multiple wilderness figures with words such as “wise” and “seasoned.” Various wilderness images knew what she wanted before she did and acted. For example, “It’s like the wind could read my mind.”

This theme was not as central to Participant 1’s experience, though it did appear. There were several wilderness images that she described as “helper or a positive figure,” implying a process of the image enabling her. In a quite different instance of this theme, she noted an experience of the wilderness forcing her to dive into a pool: “Even though I needed to go down there, it was like, ‘You’re doing it now, deal with it.’” She did not want to engage in this action and resented being forced to do so, though she recognized that she needed to.

**Discussion.** An element of wisdom runs through each of these participants’ experiences, most notably for Participants 2 and 3. Even if they did not know what it was that



they needed, they encountered it in the wilderness. It was as if the wilderness knew before them, and offered those experiences up. This attributes both guiding and serving roles to the wilderness. Each participant's descriptions of their experiences implies that the wilderness both knew his or her needs better and provided opportunities to fulfill these needs, which attributes both knowledge and benevolent will to the wilderness.

As discussed elsewhere, the participants' experiences of this quality in their wilderness imagery assume an understanding that there is a consistent consciousness that transcends individual identity, as multiple images demonstrated both the knowledge and will to provide what is needed. It is a nonlinear consciousness, moving from element to element as the imagery shifts. Participant 3 attributed this quality to both the consciousness of individual images and the consciousness of the energy that seemed to be the common thread binding each of these knowing wilderness images.

Wilderness was the place to which each participant went to experience what he or she needed. For all three participants, what they needed was an experience, rather than objects or answers. It is noteworthy that these fruits of their journeys in the wilderness were nonmaterial, experiential, and stayed strongly in their memory after the sessions occurred.

### **11. Wilderness images were experienced as analogs to waking life**

All three participants noted some relationship between their wilderness imagery in their session and their waking life. Two understood elements of their wilderness experiences in their GIM session as directly relating to an event or issue in their waking life at the time of the session. Participant 2 recognized feelings, processes, and responses to imagery from his session in his waking life at the time of the session. For instance he noted, "There was . . . uncertainty in my waking life," "A lot of obstacles seemed to be rising at the time," and "I've

always felt supported and safe in a forest in my waking life and imagery.” Participant 3 noted a direct connection between her imagery and issues at the time of her session: “I remember . . . what I was going through. It was really difficult for me to set boundaries with people.”

Additionally, Participants 1 and 3 noted a difference between wilderness with which they come into contact in her waking life and wilderness images in GIM sessions. Of one image Participant 3 said, “This is definitely a place I would only go in my [GIM] travels. It’s not part of my daily life. I don’t even dream about those. Only in GIM.” Participant 1 noted that the wilderness is particularly important to her in her waking life, and that it comes up in many of her GIM experiences. But, the specific images of wilderness that she experienced in this session were not ones that she regularly encountered.

**Discussion.** For Participant 1, the idea of wilderness is one that is both close and familiar. Because of the discrepancy between images that she encountered in waking life and in GIM, her relationship with wilderness transcended specific settings or objects of wilderness, extending to any images that fit her conceptualization of wilderness. It transcended particulars.

Two consciously drew connections between their wilderness images in GIM and waking life. It is possible that waking life events and experiences influenced the wilderness imagery that they encountered in their sessions. It is also possible that the wilderness imagery was a device with sufficient openness and ambiguity that they could project their waking life issues, events, and experiences onto it.

It is noteworthy that two reflected that their wilderness imagery in the GIM session was different from wilderness that they had encountered in their waking lives. This suggests

that their wilderness experiences in GIM are not necessarily derivative of their experiences and associations with wilderness from waking life.

## **12. The full meaning of these experiences continued to emerge over time.**

Each of the three participants reflected that it was interesting to talk about the session in such detail several weeks or months after the session had occurred, and noted that they found new meaning in it. Participant 3 said, “It’s been . . . almost five months and I can still feel the different layers of that energy.”

**Discussion.** The emergence of meaning over time suggests that both the particulars of the participants’ experiences and the therapeutic value of those experiences are not fixed in the time and place in which the session occurred. Instead, the meaning continues to shift and emerge with time and reflection. While their reflections were articulated because of the interview, the interview raised their awareness of how strong the experience was.

### **Essence**

#### **Thematic Distillation**

Based on the themes outlined above, the essence of the participants’ experiences of wilderness imagery may as follows: Participants’ experiences of wilderness imagery involved extraordinary interactions with those images. Throughout the session, they felt continuity of affect, associations, feelings, or images as their wilderness imagery shifted. Much of their experience was characterized by a feeling of openness and expansiveness. Events involving wilderness imagery felt both unexpected and predetermined, and the degree of agency that each participant felt in choice-events was important to their experiences of those events. Wilderness imagery contained that which they felt that they needed, which often involved the wilderness “knowing” more or earlier than the participant. Participants

also had experiences of becoming wilderness images. This was complemented by a distinct sense of separateness that characterized their experiences of wilderness. Each participant had energy sensations associated with wilderness images. They understood images and events in the wilderness as analogs to their waking lives, and the full meaning of their experiences continued to emerge in the weeks and months between their session and the interview.

### **Meaning Distillation**

A distillation of meanings embedded in their experiences is as follows:

Several of these themes introduced complementarity: continuity and the unexpected; receiving both support and challenge; feeling distinctly separate and experiences of merging with images in which separateness dissolved; and being on a journey while also being right where he or she needed to be. These apparent contradictions suggest that wilderness imagery in GIM may be a place that allows an individual to experience layers of complementary qualities.

Several of the emergent themes have currents of *the natural state of things*: determinism, agency in choice-events, and wilderness's wisdom. These elements, along with the sense that something about wilderness transcended surface qualities of an image, points to a possible larger organizing structure within their experiences of wilderness.

The wilderness was a place or set of objects with which participants could experience dissolution of barriers. It was perceived as wise and offered objects and opportunities. Participants had collaborative relationships with wilderness images, and the fruits of these collaborations were experiences, rather than objects or answers. In the context of these collaborations, participants experienced variable levels of obligation to what the wilderness images presented. Their experiences were not necessarily derivative of waking life

wilderness experiences, at least not in the particulars. Finally, participants' descriptions suggest that the meaning that each participant found in their experiences was strong enough to remain felt over time, was not static, and continued to evolve.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Discussion**

*To speak of wilderness is to speak of wholeness.*

(Snyder, 1990, p. 12)

The purpose of this study was to better understand the experiences of wilderness imagery of individuals who have had a series of GIM sessions. The research question posed was: How do GIM clients describe their experiences of wilderness imagery from GIM sessions? Data analysis revealed 12 emergent themes to the participants' experiences. All participants experienced each of the 12 emergent themes, save one that was experienced by two participants.

A first and fundamental point is that participants were able to describe their experiences of wilderness imagery in GIM; indeed, the participants categorized the majority of images in each of the sessions as wilderness imagery in terms of the broad definition of wilderness offered for this study. This confirms both my own observations and anecdotal evidence that wilderness imagery is quite prominent in GIM sessions.

#### **Complementarity**

Complementarity is a concept closely associated with quantum physics (Bohr, 1950). It has been used in psychology in a number of contexts, from describing complementary qualities in the therapist-client relationship (Keisler & Watkins, 1989) and within family relationships (Heatherington & Friedlander, 1990) to describing an interweaving of

complementary approaches to psychotherapy (see *Journal of Psychotherapy Integration*). At the core of each of these uses of the word is the recognition that a description or approach from a single perspective is insufficient; different qualities making up complementary relationships provide for more successful experiences or more complete descriptions than working from a single perspective.

In the same way, an individual may have complementary experiences or qualities. Pearson (1991) wrote of the “plurality of Self” (p. 67). There is, she wrote, “great diversity of potential ways of being and behaving alive within each of us,” and we experience these different parts of ourselves in shifting balances over time (p. 67). The results of the present study demonstrated the wide breadth of potentials and ways of being within each individual’s experience in GIM wilderness imagery. As has been discussed, many of these elements seemed to conflict or seemed to be less than compatible. Reich (1991) discussed the issue of integrating such seemingly incompatible or noncompatible elements in the context of religious development. He proposed that complementarity reasoning may allow an individual to coordinate ideals, attitudes, values, or beliefs that seem to be incompatible, thus making sense of apparent contradictions or paradoxes and allowing these otherwise incompatible positions to be woven together.

Bonny (2002c) and others (Bush et al., as cited in Clark, 2002; Perilli, 2002; Ward, 2002) wrote that GIM helps clients to bring integration. Johnson (1991) and Ward (2002) wrote of the therapeutic necessity of working through and integrating contradictions in the move toward wholeness. The results of this study suggest that one way that integration may come about in GIM is through complementarity.

There were four areas of complementarity that emerged from the data: support and challenge, continuity and the unexpected, simultaneously being on a journey and being right where he or she needed to be, and separateness and unity. Much of this happened in the wilderness imagery. This is not surprising, given the conflicting and sometimes paradoxical ways in which scholars have written about how humans have conceptualized and experienced wilderness (Cronon, 1995; Duerr, 1987; Merchant, 1995; Shepard, 1992).

The present study points to wilderness as an arena for the manifestation of conflicting or otherwise opposing qualities and as an actor in the process of integration within GIM. I initially understood this issue in terms of paradox; much has been written about the therapeutic usefulness of holding individuals in a state of paradox, often symbolized by the mandorla (see for example Johnson, 1991; Ward 2002). Indeed, Erdonmez (1999) found paradox to be one element of clients' experiences of pivotal moments in GIM.

Paradox is quite strong language that relies on dichotomous relationships and oppositional tendencies. In the data analysis it became clear that the participants' experiences were more nuanced than this. Paradox and dichotomization did not accurately describe what had happened in their experiences. For example, support and challenge are not paradoxes, but are complementary qualities. Unity and separation in the abstract may form a paradox. But, the way that these participants experienced unity and separation as qualities embedded in different elements of their wilderness experiences was not paradoxical. They were complementary parts of a complex and multifaceted experience. So, the integration elements that they experienced were not of paradox, but of complementarity. The complementary qualities were overlaid on single objects at times, but more often they appeared in succession or were attributed to different objects simultaneously. The unifying factor was that



complementary qualities were part of the aggregate sets of each participant's wilderness imagery. Experiences of complementarity allowed movement toward integration and wholeness.

Some GIM literature hints at this point by discussing ways in which clients are able to experience multiple dimensions of issues, concerns, personality, and the world in a single image (Bonny, 1978/2002b; Bush et al., as cited in Clark, 2002; Perilli, 2002; Ward, 2002). The findings of this study take these claims further, suggesting that GIM may hold different qualities or sides of an issue as complementary rather than oppositional, allowing for more complete experiences of integration.

**Separation and unity.** One noteworthy complementarity that emerged in participants' experiences was that of separation and unity. Several authors have written about dichotomies in wilderness between self and other (Duerr, 1987; Jordan, 2009; Shepard, 1992) in contrast to others who wrote of wilderness as a place of interconnectivity and identification (Cookson, 2011; Fox, 1995; Shepard, 1992; Zimmerman, 1992). Wilderness could be place of distinct separation, or a place of interconnectivity. Both sides of this emerged in the participants' experiences: separation, as well as interconnectivity through unity. Their images were of wilderness as separation and also of strong identification experiences. That these manifested together holds in complement one's boundedness to the built environment of human civilization and a deeply-rooted sense of connection with the environment beyond civilization. This complement points to our species' evolutionary heritage and our inescapable embeddedness in the environment, as Rozsak (1992) and Fox (1995) wrote. It is interesting that wilderness, a word that is so built on dichotomies in our cultural consciousness (Duerr, 1987; Nash, 2001), would be a place for dissolution of

barriers. Yet this dissolution is one way in which the participants experienced wilderness. Again, this point seems to be a step toward understanding the boundedness of human civilization and wider interconnectivity with the environment as complementary rather than paradoxical.

### **Organization**

There were at least two interwoven points related to organization that emerged from the results. One is of a deeper or transcendent organizational force; the other, of a wholly different type of organizational system that functions in a nonlinear and integrative fashion.

Roszak (1992) wrote that the ecological unconscious holds the inherited memory of the living organismic system of the earth, rather than just the human race. He and Fox (1995) wrote that humans are embedded within a larger “universal identity” (p. 319). From these perspectives, there is a deeper organizational force in the ecological unconscious or the universal identity that structures our experiences in the world. Several elements in the results point to a similar idea of a deeper organizational force: a sense of determinism, the lack of agency in choice-events, continuity between shifting images, and the wisdom of wilderness figures. These elements suggest that there was a force or consciousness that transcended the individual wilderness images and played a role in organizing the participant’s experience in the session. Because these elements were so strongly associated with the wilderness, it is possible that, as Roszak (1992) and Fox (1995) wrote, the participants’ experiences of coming into contact with this organizational force in the context of wilderness in GIM may have been, in part, a return to the ecological unconscious that hold the inherited memory of the living organismic system of the earth.

This issue of a deeper or alternative level of organization moves into chaos as a possible organizational model. Zimmerman (1992), Cookson (2011), and Shepard (1992) described wilderness as a series of interconnected entities within a complex system. These systems of complex relationships are chaotic and though there may not be an observable, linear pattern, there is order (Guastello & Liebovitch, 2011). The participants' descriptions of their experiences point to this type of chaotic<sup>5</sup>, nonlinear organizational system that is able to hold apparent contradictions, inconsistencies, or paradoxes as complementarities.

Bonny (2002a) also wrote about nonlinear organization of experiences in GIM. She noted particle-wave complementarity, self-organizing dissipative structures, and holographic theory as ways to better conceptualize the processes that occur in GIM. Similarly, such themes of alternative organizational systems appear in wilderness scholarship. Zimmerman (1992) and Duerr (1987) wrote of nonlinear order and chaos in the wilderness as being tied to witch culture. Other authors wrote of wilderness as having its own system of order that transcends understanding within human civilization (Duerr, 1987; Frye, 1957; Merchant, 1995; Olson & Backes, 2001; Zimmerman, 1992). In the arena of literary criticism, Frye (1957) wrote of the *green world*—a magical place of transformation with its own order, set apart from the rational systems of civilization. Duerr (1987) wrote of wilderness as a nonrational foil to civilization that is *beyond the fence* of our everyday existence. It is a place in which mystery is central, and in which humans, in effect, try on other identities. Both of these descriptions emerged in the results of this study. Participants' journeys were nonlinear

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<sup>5</sup> For the purposes of this paper, chaos is used in the mathematical sense rather than the colloquial sense. Chaos describes a system with high sensitivity to initial conditions, is unpredictable, and has order though it appears unordered (Guastello & Liebovitch, 2011).

and had elements of nonrationality. There was a sense of organization, but not one that the participants were able to predict.

Additionally, wilderness held complementarities that, at times, appeared incongruent. The prevalence of complementarity was a key finding that points to a shifted organizational system as well as shifted attitudes toward differences. Participants' experiences were integrative—they were of both/and rather than either/or. The synergistic combination of music and imagery in the altered state of consciousness that is GIM allowed the participants to enter into the *green world* through their imagery experiences, with a qualitatively different organizational system than the rationalist systems so prevalent in Western society.

These elements of an organizational system outside of the dichotomous way of thinking so common in human civilization adds to the understanding of nonlinear organization of experiences in GIM. Based on the literature, it should be no surprise that the participants in this study experienced nonlinearity and chaos in their wilderness imagery from GIM sessions. This point has strong implications both for therapy and for ways of thinking about the wilderness. Both contain experiences of nonlinear, nonrational, interactive organizational systems that are beyond the predictable and extend into the magic of therapy and the wilderness.

**Music and organization.** The music plays a central role in sustaining, deepening, and organizing experiences within GIM (Bonny, 1978/2002f; McKinney, 1990; Summer, 1988). If individuals experience an alternative organizational system in GIM, this raises several questions about the music: How does music organize these inner experiences with wilderness? Or, how does music organize the unconscious so that one experiences wilderness? In what ways is one embedded in the wilderness while in the music of a GIM

session? This study at least hints at answers to these questions; the key finding is the prevalence of complementarity. The participants' experiences were of both/and, not either/or. The ability to project onto the ambiguity of the music holds the traveler in both sides of the complementarity, going beyond the rational organizational systems that are so prevalent in Western society. Questions about the role of the music in these wilderness experiences are taken up below.

### **Implications for Therapy**

As discussed above, the prevalence of integrative experiences in wilderness imagery is of great significance to the therapeutic process. The alternate organizational system in the wilderness and in GIM also may provide opportunities for developing new ways of thinking, new perspectives, and new ways of being. Additionally, the simultaneous support and challenge from the wilderness provided each participant with opportunities to grow, heal, or achieve insights while being supported, all of which are necessary qualities for effective therapy. These complementary qualities were found in the imagery, and at times in the same image. Further, wilderness was a container for knowledge, and experiences with the knowing wilderness allowed participants to come into contact with this knowledge, which was contained inside them. In effect, the imaginal experience of wilderness served as a translator or mouthpiece from the unconscious.

The findings of this study may also have implications for assessment. If, as Cronon (1995) wrote, wilderness is a place into which we project disowned or unacknowledged cultural values, then wilderness in GIM may be a place onto which individuals project their own disowned or unacknowledged values, and perhaps qualities, memories, attitudes, and beliefs as well. It is likely that one difference between the ways in which wilderness imagery

manifests for individual GIM clients is that the wilderness is made up of different individuals' sets of disowned or unacknowledged values that are projected onto the concept of wilderness. Such a reading of wilderness imagery lends a greater importance to understanding how individuals experience their wilderness imagery in GIM sessions.

**Peak experiences.** The results of this study echo findings of McDonald, Wearing, and Ponting (2009). The authors found that some characteristics of peak experiences in the wilderness were a feeling of separation, a feeling of oneness or connection, overcoming challenges, and a feeling of significance in that experience. These were all strong components of participants' experiences of wilderness imagery in GIM in this study. This overlap suggests that wilderness experiences in GIM have qualitative similarities to peak experiences in the wilderness. Additionally, this parallel suggests that wilderness experiences in GIM may have qualities that tend to trigger peak experiences. It is noteworthy that at least two participants in this study had peak experiences in the sessions on which their interviews were based. If peak experiences are indeed therapeutically useful (Maslow, 1968, pp. 209-210), then these elements suggest that wilderness imagery in GIM may be particularly therapeutic.

**Image as reality.** Another important point is that these participants' experiences of wilderness imagery were real, felt experiences in their bodies and minds. The processes that they described were actually happening in the participant's being and moved beyond metaphor (see for example Achterberg, 1985; McKinney, 2002). Accordingly, the experiences such as opening up, finding wisdom, overcoming challenges, and achieving integration were real and felt and accordingly may have a strong impact on their therapeutic growth.

### **Implications for Environmental Discourse**

This study directly links the transformation of an individual in therapy with transformed relationships with the environment. The sheer recognition of these co-occurring processes has important implications for the wider ecological discourse in that the health of one may impact or be reflected in the health of the other. This returns to one of the overarching themes in this study: integration and complementarity. As Rozsak (1992) and Fox (1995) wrote, our psychological health as individuals and as a culture is linked with the health of the cosmos. Any meaningful cultural transformation starts with individuals. It is possible that therapies like GIM might have a role in catalyzing this transformation, or at least helping us better understand it.

The results of this study suggest that one may recognize a deeper organizational system in wilderness into which one can become integrated. This point would imply that through GIM it may indeed be possible to become more deeply involved with the nonhuman environment in a way that is not anthropocentric or even anthropogenic but is integrated into the vast interconnected system.

Rozsak (1992), Fox (1995), and Grange (1977) each wrote about forming more meaningful relationships with the environment. The participants in this study have experienced this process in GIM. It is not clear if these transformed relationships generalize outside of the therapy session, but it is worth pointing out that they happen, as Rozsak, Fox, and Grange each posited.

### **The Role of the Music and GIM Space**

A question that this study did not address is the role of the music in evoking and sustaining wilderness imagery. In all interviews combined, participants mentioned the music

only three times, each quite briefly. One noted that a harp may have been playing during a particular image, and another drew a connection between a change in his imagery and a change in the music, as well as between the character of the music while he floated downward. This suggests that the participants were not particularly conscious of the musical elements that underpinned their sessions at the time of the interview, a finding also noted by Erdonmez (1999). However, their memories of the wilderness experiences were quite strong.

While the data collected in this study do not point to an answer to this issue, it may be that the prevalence of wilderness experiences in GIM has more to do with the space created in the GIM session than with the characteristics of individual pieces of music. The music is central in setting up the space and catalyzing and deepening the dynamic inner experiences (see for example Bonny, 1975/2002d; Erdonmez, 1999). However, this GIM space is much more than the sum of its constituent parts, which include the music, the imagery, the therapeutic context, and the altered state of consciousness.

In the GIM space, clients experience a realm with a new set of rules, new ways of being, new organizational systems. It is a nonlinear, nonrational place. This is remarkably similar to how scholars have discussed conceptualizations of wilderness. It is possible that the GIM client's psyche draws a psychological equivalence between these two spaces. Upon entering into the altered space of a GIM session, the psyche goes to a place that, in Western cultural consciousness, reflects the qualities of the GIM space. While the music acts to sustain, deepen, and transform the images, clients may go to the wilderness initially because of the psychological congruence of GIM and wilderness. Both are separate spaces that are beyond full comprehension and that operate under organizational systems that are unfamiliar. Accordingly, the parallels between the ways in which the participants experienced wilderness



imagery and the ways in which Western culture has conceptualized wilderness may be a stronger connection than the relationship between characteristics of individual pieces of music and the prevalence of wilderness imagery. Should this hold true, a resultant question is how music organizes these wilderness experiences. Further research is needed in this area.

### **Limitations**

This study was limited by the small number of participants due to the small pool of potential participants that met the inclusion criteria. It is likely that the intensely personal nature of the GIM experiences examined in this study may have impacted the willingness of some individuals to participate.

The interviews for this study were based on only one of each participant's sessions. While this allowed for a much greater depth and detail in the discussion of the participants' experiences, it may not have provided a representative sketch of each participant's experiences of wilderness in GIM across multiple sessions.

Because this was a qualitative study, results are not generalizable. Further research could extend this study into a mixed-methods approach in a sequential-exploratory design (Creswell, 2013) by adding a survey of GIM clients to determine the degree to which these results generalize to other individuals who have experienced GIM sessions.

As with any qualitative study, the emergent themes and the discussion thereafter were influenced by my perspective. Despite the process of the epoché and conscious effort to limit the influence of my preconceptions, these preconceptions likely still influenced the interviews and data analysis.

A further limitation concerns a conflict between the methodology, the phenomenon under study, and the interview process. The Introduction and Method chapters noted the

wholly subjective nature of wilderness and that describing an object or setting as wilderness is dependent on one's subjective experience of that object or setting. Yet, the interviews began with a brief definition of wilderness. It is likely that this definition shaped participant responses and influenced which settings or objects each participant defined as wilderness. The rationale for beginning with a definition of wilderness was to provide a focus and starting point from which the interview would proceed. The definition was an intentionally broad one and the introduction to the interview emphasized the participants' primacy in determining whether an image would be categorized as wilderness or nonwilderness. Participants were free to diverge from this starting definition and did. Still, it would have been truer to the subjective nature of the idea of wilderness to either elicit each participant's own definition of wilderness and proceed from there as a starting point for the interview or to proceed with no definition other than the word itself.

An important element in qualitative research is triangulation or taking data from multiple types of sources. While this study included participant confirmation of the analysis, data came from a single source: the interviews. In future studies, it may increase the validity of the findings to include other sources, such as insights from the participants' GIM therapist or artwork produced in response to GIM sessions.

### **Further Research**

Because the results of this study do not generalize, a next step in extending this research would be to expand it into a sequential exploratory mixed-methods design (Creswell, 2013) to investigate the degree to which these 12 emergent themes describe other GIM clients' experiences of wilderness. Additionally, an expanded study with a larger number of participants including clients from multiple GIM therapists would broaden and

make more relevant the descriptions of wilderness experiences. It also would be interesting to compare wilderness experiences in GIM with equivalent experiences in other image-based therapies and ecotherapies.

Two larger issues discussed above that require more research are the relationships between music and wilderness imagery and between the GIM process and wilderness imagery. What is the connection between music and wilderness images? Are there particular pieces or GIM programs that are more likely to occur with images of wilderness? In what ways does the music impact the manifestations and experiences of wilderness images? Why do GIM therapists so commonly use images of the natural world as focus images with which to begin a session<sup>6</sup>? What is it about the GIM process that takes people to the wilderness? Perhaps there is something about these images that is implicitly understood by the therapist and client to have healing or growth potential. On a more abstracted level, how does music organize these inner experiences with the wilderness? How does music organize one's unconscious in a way that one ends up in the wilderness? There is no evidence for a causal relationship between the music and wilderness imagery; what, then, is the nature of this connection? These questions are just a few that have sprung from the work described in this study.

### **Closing**

This study is a phenomenological inquiry into how GIM clients experienced wilderness imagery in their sessions. Twelve themes emerged from the participants' descriptions of their experiences of wilderness imagery. Major findings of this study are that experiences of wilderness imagery were associated with complementarity in qualities,

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<sup>6</sup> Note that "a place in nature" was used as a focus image for one of the three sessions examined in this study.

attitudes, and experiences and with a shifted, nonrational organizational system. Despite the prevalence of imagery of the nonhuman world in GIM, this is the first study to examine portions of this category. Rather than a focus on high or low experiences in GIM (Grocke, 1999), this study focused relationships between human and nonhuman within the imagery. Continued research into the relationships between the human and nonhuman in this intensely personal and at times transpersonal space that is a GIM session may point more clearly toward a cosmology of interconnection that springs from the unconscious. This greater understanding of the interconnection between human and nonhuman is crucial, because at a certain point the distinction between human and nonhuman fails. Underneath the constructs of civilization we are wild and reside in wilderness. Novelist Edward Abbey described it in his own brash way at the close of *The Journey Home* (1991):

We need wilderness because we are wild animals. Every man needs a place where he can go to go crazy in peace. Every Boy Scout troop deserves a forest to get lost, miserable, and starving in. Even the maddest murderer of the sweetest wife should get a chance for a run to the sanctuary of the hills. If only for the sport of it. For the terror, freedom, and delirium. Because we need brutality and raw adventure, because men and women first learned to love in, under, and all around trees, because we need for every pair of feet and legs about ten leagues of naked nature, crags to leap from, mountains to measure by, deserts to finally die in when the heart fails.

(Abbey, 1991, p. 229)

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## Appendix A

### Informed Consent Form

Wilderness Imagery in Guided Imagery and Music (GIM): A Phenomenological Analysis  
Tim Honig, MT-BC, Principal Investigator  
Appalachian State University Music Therapy Program

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

You are invited to participate in a research study to be conducted by Tim Honig, MT-BC, a graduate student at Appalachian State University. This study will explore experiences of wilderness imagery in Guided Imagery and Music. You are invited to be a participant in this study because you have had at least four GIM sessions with Tim Honig, are at least 18 years old, and do not currently have symptoms of active psychosis.

Your participation in this study will require you to participate in an interview focused on your experiences of wilderness imagery in one of your GIM sessions. Before this interview, you will be asked to select one of your GIM sessions, excluding your first two, in which wilderness imagery seemed to be most prominent. You will be asked to review the transcript from this session in preparation for the interview. If needed, you will be provided with an electronic copy of this transcript prior to the interview. You will be provided with a hard copy at the time of the interview.

The aim of this study is to better understand the experience of wilderness imagery from the perspective of GIM clients. Some dimensions of this topic include the content of the wilderness imagery that occurred in that session, any action associated with that content, as well as any attitudes, interactions, and impressions associated with that imagery. The interview will follow a semi-structured format centered on these topics. This interview is estimated to last approximately two hours. It will occur in a private room in a mutually convenient location. The interview will be audio-recorded for data collection purposes. Following the interview, the researcher will transcribe this into a digital text file. All audio-recordings and digital text files will be stored in a password-protected computer file. Any identifying information will be kept strictly confidential with the following exceptions:

- You request that the therapist inform or refer you to someone else for further assistance
- The researcher determines that you are potentially harmful or dangerous to yourself or others
- The researcher determines that you are abusing or neglecting a child, an elder, or an individual with a developmental disability, or
- The researcher is ordered by a judge or court of law to disclose such information.

This study will involve a phenomenological analysis of these interviews on the imagery portion of your GIM sessions. The researcher will analyze transcripts for issues related to participants' descriptions of the role of wilderness imagery. All identifying information will be removed from the transcripts before they are passed to the thesis advisor. The principal researcher will be the only individual with access to any identifying information. Your anonymity will be protected by the use of pseudonyms in the final report. You have the right to review a copy of the interview transcripts, and will be given the opportunity to review a copy of the final research report.

The sessions will include verbal discussion your GIM session content. Accordingly, there is some risk that you may be asked to discuss personal information. You have the right to decline to answer any question or discuss any topic. Because the researcher has functioned in the past as your GIM therapist, the shift to researcher-participant roles will result in a dual relationship. All efforts will be made to prevent this dual relationship from becoming problematic, as the interview will be based on therapeutic material already witness and discussed in a previous GIM session. The data collection process in this research study is seen as a collaborative effort between researcher and participant in order to better understand an element of the GIM method; accordingly, it lies outside the bounds of psychotherapy. There are no other foreseeable risks in your participation. There are no direct benefits or compensation to participants in this study. However, your participation could lead to your further reflection on and processing of your GIM sessions, and may help to add to the understanding of the role of wilderness imagery in GIM.

This research project has been approved, as required, by the Institutional Review Board of Appalachian State University and is under the advisement of Dr. Cathy McKinney, Professor of Music Therapy. Any decision you make to participate or not to participate in this study will not affect any future GIM sessions. By signing this form, you give the researcher permission to anonymously use the transcripts from the interview as part of the final report, which will be used in the researcher's Thesis in Music Therapy, in partial completion of the Master of Music Therapy degree. You further understand that this report, or portions of this report, may be used in publications, presentations, or future study. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time with no penalty. You are also free to end the interview or withdraw your consent for inclusion in the final analysis at any time. You are free not to answer any questions that you choose without penalty.

\_\_\_\_\_  
IRB Approval Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Approval Expiration Date

If you agree to these terms and will participate in this study, please sign the following:

I have read and understand the Informed Consent and conditions of this project. I have had all my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Should I have any questions about this research or its conduct, I may contact:

Investigator:

Tim Honig, MT-BC  
Graduate Assistant  
Appalachian State University  
(630-779-4298  
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## **Appendix B**

### **Narrative Sketches**

The following narrative sketches provide brief descriptions of the sessions that the clients chose to discuss in their interviews. These provide added detail and context for the emergent themes and distillations in Chapter 4.

#### **Participant 1**

Focus Image: a place in nature

Imagery: The client begins at the top of a grassy hill in the daytime sun. She sits with her back against a tree and looks around the expanse around her. A robin comes over, hops around the tree limbs and down onto her shoulder, and nestles in her hair. The robin flies up holding onto the client's sweater and lifts her up through the tree branches. They fly up and up to the top of the giant tree, and she rests on the top of the canopy. Here, she looks at the expanse around her. It is the same as before, but even more open. Then, the client slides back down the tree. At first, it is smooth like a fireman's pole. As she slides further, it becomes rougher and more bark-like. At the bottom of the tree, she comes to a giant poppy shaped like a boat. She gets in, and the wind breaks it off the stem. The wind blows the poppy-boat around, and she floats until the boat comes to rest next to a sheep. The sheep jumps in; she gives it crackers and the sheep lets her pet it. While looking through the sheep's wool, the client is surprised to find a diamond. She buries it in the dirt outside the boat, and it flies back out and onto her tongue. It grows and transforms into a giant ice mountain. Now, the scene changes to a bleak and harsh expanse of snow and ice. She climbs the ice mountain, but at a point is not able to ascend any higher. She puts her arms around



the mountain and it melts into a deep pool. Pedestals come out of the snow around her and the pool, forcing her into the pool. She swims down and gets stuck in the narrow portion of the pool. The pool walls expand and she kicks out to the other side. Again, it is bleak and snowy all around. She is covered in a black substance, which stands out in contrast to the bright and blue-tinted surroundings. She becomes a blackbird and flies up to look around at the expanse around her. Then, her body becomes heavy and her attention rests with this somatic imagery.

### **Participant 2**

Focus Image: a place with someone

Imagery: The client begins sitting on a beach near a forest. He walks around, then begins running. He sees a girl beckoning him into the forest; he follows. Once in the forest, he is again alone. He takes in the energy of a tree, then climbs it. At the top, he sees mountains in the distance. They look cold and uninviting. He gets onto a leaf and it begins to float, holding him. While on the leaf, the girl reemerges. He ignores her this time. The client continues to float on the leaf, notices how close the stars look, and reaches up and grabs a star. The scene shifts and he finds himself in a desert near a pyramid. He walks to it and finds gold doors that open automatically for him; he walks in. He chooses one of several moving staircases and ascends it to the top of the pyramid. There is a light there that he becomes a part of. Then, he finds himself on a cloud in space with his family, watching the expanse of space and the earth.

### **Participant 3**

Focus Image: a place with a fence

Imagery: She begins in a cave, where she feels at once contained and free. She enters a body of water in the cave and swims with dark-colored fish down the stream. The stream opens up into a powerful waterfall, which in turn opens up into a lake. Here, animals gather around.

Most notable is a fawn with beautiful, innocent eyes. She feels responsible for these animals, but does not want to be. A horse comes to rescue her and take her away from the place. In the woods, they come to a woman that feels like the client, then passes by. A red kite comes and takes her back to the lake. This time, the lake feels much more open and secure. She lays on a big stone in the lake, surrounded by a circling water shield. Then, she gets onto a sailboat and sails to Bergen, Norway. In an alley in the city, a wind pushes her. She sees an old woman that feeds her. Then, hooded figures and a mist emerge. She follows the mystical procession, and encounters a dragon along the way. She comes to a wise old man meditating and surrounded by butterflies. This old man has something for her, but she cannot find it.

The imagery shifts to a modern dance studio, then to a library. As she smells the books, they begin to come alive; all the while, she is looking for something that she cannot find. Then, she suddenly finds herself back at the lake. She realizes that she is the woman whom she met earlier, and that this place was what she was looking for.

### **Vita**

Timothy Honig was raised in southwestern Florida and Illinois by James and Sheryl Honig. He moved on from there to Lawrence University in Appleton, WI where he studied trumpet performance with John Daniel and graduated with a Bachelor of Music degree in 2011, *magna cum laude*. He then entered the Music Therapy Equivalency/Masters program at Appalachian State University as a Chancellor's Fellow and graduate assistant. Tim completed his clinical internship in music therapy at Advocate Lutheran General Hospital in Park Ridge, IL with Susan Cotter-Schaufele. In January 2014 he was board-certified as a music therapist and returned to Appalachian to complete his graduate work in music therapy under the mentorship of Dr. Cathy McKinney. He received a Master of Music Therapy degree and post-graduate certificate in Expressive Arts Therapy in December 2014

Tim is an advanced trainee in the Bonny Method of Guided Imagery and Music (GIM) and has studied with Dr. Cathy McKinney, Madeleine Ventre, and Liz Moffitt. He currently teaches music therapy and supervises pre-internship students as a Visiting Adjunct Instructor at Appalachian State University.